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# TEACH YOURSELF PUBLIC SPEAKING

By  
PETER WESTLAND

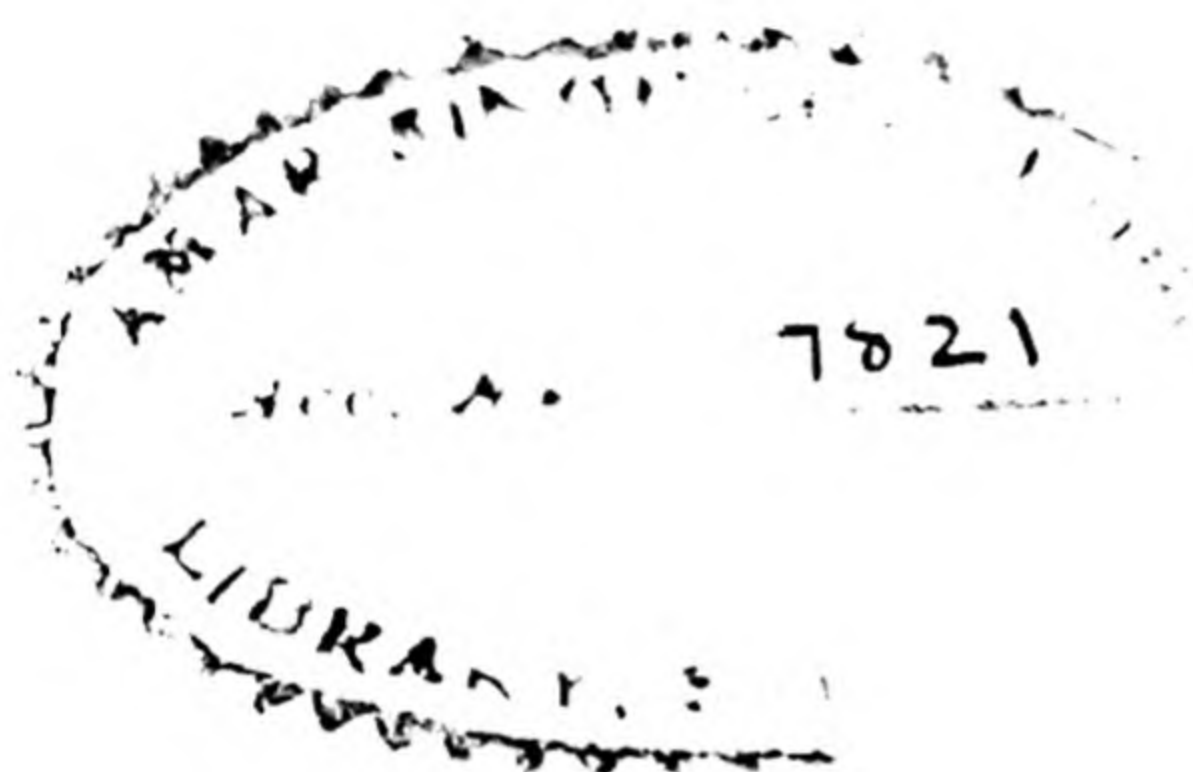


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## CHAPTER I

### YOU AND YOUR ART

By the word "speech" we signify the usual means by which we convey our thoughts, information and ideas to other minds. A speech therefore implies three things—a speaker, something spoken about, and a listener. The speech is the connection between these three realities.

What is this connection in itself? You will naturally want to know the answer to this question, because you cannot handle the link until you know what it is. If you were told to take charge of the lighting of three separate buildings working on one lighting system, you would immediately ask what the system was in itself. Unless you knew whether it was of gas or electricity, you could not begin to manage it. In the same way, unless you know exactly how speaker, subject and audience are connected by public speaking, you cannot master the system and art.

Fortunately, the answer is short and simple. Aristotle wrote his book on Rhetoric thirteen hundred years ago; since then no one has improved his definition that the aim of public speaking makes it what it is, "the Art of Persuasion". If you think it over, you will see that this leaves nothing more to be said. You speak to persuade people to adopt a



certain point of view or—which is the same thing—to deepen their conviction of a view they already hold. Or you speak to persuade people to begin a certain course of action or to resist some activity already begun or contemplated. Or your address may aim at encouraging or discouraging your listeners with reference to some activity. Whatever kind of speech you think of, persuasion is the speaker's office in it.

You will immediately notice that talks which aim solely at giving information, such as a teacher's lesson, cannot be called public speaking. Even here, however, many instructional talks may become speeches, since they often have a persuasive purpose: "You can do the job in this way, and so you will do it".

Now you can see the connection between yourself, any subject on which you may speak, and your audience. It is to persuade. The purpose of this book is to tell you all you need to know about yourself and speech-making to enable you to make that connection whenever you wish. Do not decide here and now that you cannot. You have much to learn, and the more you learn, the more you will realise that great gifts are not necessary if you are to become a successful public speaker.

Later in this chapter we will come back to Aristotle's definition, to see how many kinds of persuasiveness are at the speaker's command. For the moment we will think about the speaker himself—the man whom Emerson encourages with the words, "Speech is power, speech is to persuade, to con-

vert, to appeal". What qualifications must be in the man or woman who takes up public speaking? In other words, let us immediately tackle the question, are you fit for the job? When you have settled that in your mind, it will be time enough to start thinking again about speaking itself.

### A Speaker's Qualifications

The first qualification which must be deeply rooted in every aspirant to success in public speaking is Determination to Succeed. "Nothing succeeds like success", but determination is the first essential. You must be resolved that you are going to learn the art of good speech, both by study and practice, and that you will achieve your purpose of being able to please and persuade your audiences. At present you may be doubtful whether you can reach that goal. Well, you have something to say about many subjects, because you are interested in them. You discuss them at your fireside, argue about them at the club, explain them on buses, expose their defects to people you meet in the train, show their perfections to strangers in queues. Yes, you can talk all right about the things you are interested in. Therefore, if someone were to show you the means of doing it, you could talk about these subjects to more than two or three people at a time. You could win other people to your point of view and, as you found the ability to do this growing in you, you would be keen to speak before many people. This book is going to show you how to do that very thing—to speak about things in which you are



interested and knowledgeable, in such a way as to interest and persuade other people. Make your mind up here and now that you can do it, as thousands of others have done before you.

To remove any doubt you may have as to whether you have the resolution to study and practise this art, I want, as author of this book, to tell you that if you are as determined to succeed as I am determined that you shall succeed, we will accomplish a notable success between us. Put your mind and heart into the work now, and so acquire the first qualities which every public speaker must have: conviction and determination.

Genuine Work is the next qualification you must have. You see, I am being quite candid with you from the start, and at the same time honestly assuring you that there is nothing in public speaking which is beyond your reach. The great American orator, Henry Ward Beecher, used to encourage beginners by saying, "Most men can be trained to think on their feet". Effort is the only condition for the fulfilment of this remark.

Every art offers examples of success which come from determination allied to patient effort. Work is the price of success in anything worth doing. Without it talents far above the ordinary have been wasted, because their possessors would not submit to the wholesome discipline of work and practice. Talent alone rarely succeeds, and never reaches the success due to it unless it is developed by work. Caruso had vocal organs and muscular development unique in their value to a singer; his training was

none the less arduous and thorough because of them. Without work he would never have become the "song-bird of the ages". Yehudi Menuhin was a concert violinist at four years of age; in manhood he still practises for hours daily. In literature, George Moore wrote a dozen books before anyone believed he had unusual talent. He continued to write, and became a master of English prose composition. Demosthenes, the celebrated Greek orator, was so imperfect in delivery and so impeded in his articulation that he not only practised day and night, but even put pebbles in his mouth to increase his natural impediment and force himself by almost superhuman efforts to overcome it.

The lesson of all this is that even moderate talents gain solid success by learning the art or craft thoroughly, and by practising its principles with disregard of difficulty and occasional failure. This holds good of the Public Speaker's gifts. Probably your gifts for public speaking are more than moderate. No, I am not trying to flatter you. There is a reason for my saying it.

Here it is. It is a remarkable fact that many people think they can write. This impression is not a guarantee that its victim has any talent for writing. Few people think they can address an audience. If they do think they can, it is usually a sign that there are qualities in them urging them to try to speak. The longing to write is often the result of wishful thinking, but the desire to speak in public is more usually the result of certain qualities of mind and character. You are taking the trouble to read



this book, and I think that indicates that you have at least a better chance than most of learning and using its lessons. It shows that you probably have quite decided gifts for the practice of this art, if you take it seriously and give them their chance.

We have already thought about your determination to succeed. Now, we have seen that you must work to fulfil that resolution and that you probably have the natural talents to do so. Don't waste them by being lazy or discouraged in your work.


The third qualification which you should find in yourself at the outset of your work is Sincerity. An example will explain what this means. Have you ever listened to the patter of the "nailer" at a mock auction—the man whose job it is to catch the attention of passers-by and to fasten it down so hypnotically that they will enter the auction-room? Were you persuaded that he really was selling fountain-pens for sixpence and gold hunter watches for half-a-guinea? Of course you were not. Yet the man was almost an artist.

He was fluent in speech, humorous, friendly, encouraging, and always reasonable. He was *almost* an artist and *almost* a good speaker, because one quality was lacking, and you knew what quality was missing. Sincerity. An audience, excluding the people who attend mock auctions, knowing that they run the risk of being robbed under legal cover, is never persuaded by an insincere speaker. Oratory is an art, and one of the worst flaws which can destroy it, by totally defeating its purpose, is insincerity. For no one can convince others, or even

hold their attention, unless his own honesty of purpose and the genuineness of his personal opinion are evident enough to be apparent to the audience. As Emerson said, "The eloquent man is one . . . who is drunk with a certain belief".

When you think about that saying, you will see that there are two reasons behind it. One is that an audience always suspects, even if it does not prove for itself, any insincerity in an orator. And it rightly feels insulted at being asked to hold an opinion which the speaker himself does not accept. What right has he, it asks, to urge this upon us when he does not accept it himself? The result is a rejection of the action or decision which the speaker is advocating.

The other reason is that honest conviction always impresses an audience and wins from it a measure of admiration. Even if you do not win your hearers to the point of view which you hold, your evident sincerity in trying to promote it will unfailingly impress those who cannot, here and now, assent. You thus gain at least their kindly interest and sympathetic attention. That is the first step towards persuading their minds and hearts to accept what you have been urging. Your sincerity on this occasion may easily prove to have been a preparation for complete success at another time. Emerson completes his statement on this point by a striking remark, an unforgettable expression of this truth, in the declaration that the hunter's bullet will always find its mark if it is first dipped in the marksman's blood.





Never allow yourself, for any reason at all, to say what you do not sincerely believe to be the truth or the better thing in idea or action.

The next qualification to be found in a speaker is very obvious. We all know people who are sincere and, in view of their want of this next qualification, whose determination is regrettable. They have two qualifications, but not that of Knowledge. Determination to impress your audience and conviction of the truth of what you say to it will do only harm unless you have sufficient knowledge of your subject to back up whatever statements you make.

The qualification really embraces two distinct ideas, these being not only knowledge of the facts your subject contains, but an exact idea of what that subject is. Two questions must be answered before you can even begin to choose a subject, What exactly is to be my subject? and, Do I know enough about it? This may sound painfully elementary. But notice how many amateur speakers spoil their chance of success by ignoring one or both of them. Recently I listened to an address by a nurse, who was speaking to ladies' organisations throughout the country during a recruiting campaign for certain professional work abroad. Her purpose evidently was to persuade the ladies either to volunteer for training or to persuade their daughters to do so.

Quite rightly, the nurse tried to give her audience a picture of the kind of life she and her companions were experiencing. This was so interesting, to the audience as well as to herself, that most of the speech was devoted to it. What facts she possessed,

strictly relevant to her purpose, we did not know. And she did not know the exact subject of her speech, for she scarcely mentioned it. She was not there to describe nursing conditions overseas, except incidentally. Yet most of her address was given up to an able description of the towns she had worked in, the types of shock cases, wounded, neurotic cases, etc., the nurses had dealt with. Living conditions were described in detail. So it went on, an absorbingly interesting speech, but without the statement of any real reason why anyone should wish to join the nursing profession. I was not surprised to learn afterwards that only one lady had volunteered, and she, it appeared, was willing to volunteer for anything which would take her abroad! Her decision had been made before the delivery of the address, so that it could scarcely be placed to the credit of the speaker. X

The lesson which that nurse should have learned is, "Always keep your exact subject in mind, and never speak without a sufficient number of facts to support your reason for choosing it". Gather all the relevant facts you can. Think out their true significance. In a later chapter in this book you will be told how to collect facts and how to deal with them when selecting them for a speech. Here we note only that knowledge is an indispensable qualification in every Public Speaker, amateur or professional, who must know his subject, stick to it, and support it by putting plenty into it.

Disraeli's maiden speech in the House of Commons may be quoted as an illustration of this truth. It



was carefully prepared and polished. The result was appalling beyond the unhappy speaker's power to imagine. It contained phrases like, "majestic mendicancy", "about that time, sir, when our cathedral bell announced the death of our monarch", "amatory eclogue", and similar horrors. Its chief fault was that Disraeli completely misjudged the occasion. He was reduced to begging for silent attention: "I wish I really could induce the House to give me five minutes more". Almost every sentence was interrupted by cries, mockery and laughter. These interruptions began through political and personal dislike, but the whole House soon joined in ridiculing the pretentious and miserable address. A lesser man than Disraeli would have faced political extinction as its result.

That evening one of Parliament's veterans, Sheil, sought the unhappy young orator and, although he belonged to a party which had little reason to like Disraeli, he offered excellent advice, acceptable by every beginner.

"Speak often . . . but speak shortly. Astonish them by speaking on subjects of detail. Quote figures, facts, dates, calculations. And in a short time the House will sigh for the wit and eloquence which they all know are in you. They will encourage you to pour them forth, and then you will have the ear of the House and be a favourite."

In other words, know your subject, have a mass of facts ready in its support, and be content to begin

quietly. A week later Disraeli again faced the House, this time to speak on the dull subject of copyright. He showed himself thoroughly familiar with his subject and illustrated it by many facts. When he sat down his address had won the approval of all who had unanimously scorned him before. By the end of that year Disraeli was the House's favourite speaker. He was recognised as possessing unusual gifts, and his fellow-members were so assured of his complete knowledge of every subject he chose to address them on, that they had the confidence to enjoy all those devices of oratory with which he adorned it.

In summary, know exactly what your subject is; understand it fully; marshal every fact relevant to it as you begin preparation for its delivery.

These facts you are to pass on to your audience, and this brings us to the fourth qualification you must have to be a successful speaker—namely, Vocabulary. We must treat this in a practical way. Beginning with a practical example, you would not go into business without providing your shop with as large a stock of goods as you could afford. You would not begin practice as a dentist without a dentist's instruments. The speaker's stock-in-trade is words. They are his instruments, so that he must build up a collection as large and as varied as his future needs may require. He must have at his command a wide range of striking and effective words.

This qualification of vocabulary implies two things. One is the knowledge of the meaning of words, and



the other is their correct pronunciation. It is a good thing for you now to examine yourself in both these needs.

Do you ever, for example, attach to a word a meaning which does not belong to it? A frequent misuse of a word is found in "egoism". You hear people say, "I noticed his egoism" when they mean "his egotism". What they actually said is not nonsense, but it definitely is not what they meant to say. Do you ever misuse words like that? Again, you might ask yourself whether you are familiar with all the shades of meaning a word may have. Take a word like "canny". You may know that it means shrewd or thrifty, or you may know of other meanings. But do you know them all? If you do not know, for instance, that in one part of England a man is canny when he is well and in another his job is canny if it can easily be done, you cannot really say that the word is part of your vocabulary.

In examining this qualification further, you may ask whether all the words you use really belong to the English language? Most speakers who congratulate a man on attaining a jubilee refer to him as a jubilarian. In fact, there is no word in our language meaning *one who keeps a jubilee*. How would you refer to him in your speech of congratulation? ))

You have consequently three questions to answer as you gather your vocabulary: Are all these words real English? Do I know their exact meaning? Do I know all their meanings?

Now we can turn to the other consideration which vocabulary recalls to us—the question of pronunciation. Apart from the fact that many people mispronounce simple words like *because*, *controversy* or *centenary*, there are certainly a number of English words whose pronunciation varies according to meaning. For example, if I wish to paraphrase, “When I finish this work, it will be a perfect work of art”, I could say, “When I consummate this work, it will be a consummate work of art”. Here *consummate* is accented on the first syllable the first time, but the second time, when it means perfect and flawless, the accent is on the second syllable. Whenever you use words which vary in pronunciation as they vary in meaning, there will always be at least one member of your audience who will know whether you are pronouncing them correctly. And if you are not, he will wonder whether you are as careless about your facts as you are about your pronunciation.

To qualify yourself for your task you should begin to-day to gather a vocabulary, tested by yourself as you build it up, of sound English words. Begin by checking ordinary words you are sure of, with the aid of a dictionary. Pass on to words less familiar, picking them out of what you read and hear, and checking their meaning and pronunciation before entering them in your Word Book. Go through that book from time to time, revising what you have entered. It is surprising how often you will find that old mistakes have crept back into use. By enlarging your Word Book every week, you will soon acquire an exact and impressive vocabulary.



To start you off, do you know the meanings and pronunciation of the following words: posthumous, cerement, gallant, asthma, idyll, wassail, lichen?

A hint to finish this point: accustom your tongue, teeth and lips to clear enunciation by reading aloud several times a week. At the beginning, aim at clear speaking, and later you can speed up your practice reading.

This reading brings to mind the final qualification you must have as a speaker. It is Practice. Perhaps it can be said that the accomplished pianist owes as much to practice as to talent. For successful public speaking also practice is of the first importance. Never pass an opportunity to speak. At the beginning you may not speak well; you may even have a few real failures, with embarrassment as your only apparent result. That does not matter at the beginning, for, as Everett Hale has written, "First, speak whenever anyone asks you; and secondly, no one will ever make a speaker of himself until he is ready to make a fool of himself for his subject".

The situation is not really as grim as this, for there is a way of avoiding the painful process of making a fool of yourself in public. Moreover, to speak when you are unprepared is almost a crime against your audience, and we have already dealt with it in this chapter. The breaking of this rule, against speaking on a subject with which you are unfamiliar, may be avoided by the same method as you use to enable you to speak without risking the smiles which can greet a weak attempt.

The way to avoid the difficulty and to observe



the rule is to make your speech a short explanation of your reasons for not being able to speak! That is simple enough. It will take only two minutes, can offend no one, and gains you useful practice. The point can be expressed in the words of the eminent orator and statesman, Fox, who said of his early days in Parliament, "During five whole sessions I spoke every night but one, and I regret that I did not speak that night too!" Practice is indeed essential, and you should use every opportunity to secure it.

Now you have in mind all the qualifications you need to become a successful public speaker; Determination to Succeed, Genuine Work, Sincerity, Knowledge, Vocabulary and Practice. To ladies determination and vocabulary are specially recommended as being, perhaps, those of which they are most in need. They are naturally more diffident than men of undertaking formal public speech, and they often incline to use a limited vocabulary.

This chapter should have assured you that you have the gifts needed for the undertaking you wish to assume. Perhaps you may not become another Burke, or a Henry Ward Beecher, or an Aristide Briand. They had oratorical gifts touched with genius, and they had opportunities for perfecting their art which are denied to most of us. But you have the talents and qualifications necessary to real success in public speech and to acquire that influence which the exercise of your gifts can bring you.

## CHAPTER II

### YOUR SPEECH AND YOUR AUDIENCE

IN Chapter I reference was made to Aristotle's definition of rhetoric as "the art of persuasion". You have seen the qualifications which the speaker must have, and it is now time to think about the speech and the people who listen to it. As an introduction, and to impress on the mind that the kind of oratory you are undertaking is indeed the art of persuasion, we may make a few notes on the rise of rhetoric in the early days of public speaking.

As to when oratory itself began, there is, of course, no record in history. As soon as man began to hold meetings, tribal or communal or family, oratory of some sort resulted. There is no doubt, however, about the origin of scientific public speaking—that is, of the public address which is based on established psychological principles and artistic rules of composition.

This kind of public speaking, or rhetoric, arose from the quarrelsome nature of the Sicilians and their love of litigation. Disputes and law cases were so common in their island that a certain Corax, who lived in Syracuse about 500 B.C., reduced the methods of pleading to a number of principles. He said that a speech should consist of introduction, narrative, arguments, additional statements, and conclusion. A man named Tisias joined him in



teaching people how to speak well and succeed in their claims before the Sicilian courts. Their methods contained many faults, such as the use of long words and similar devices calculated to impress listeners uninstructed in the art of rhetoric. In 427 B.C. Gorgias was sent by the people of Leontini as ambassador to Athens, where the Greeks were amazed at the old man's novel and persuasive addresses.

Gorgias' visit coincided with an Athenian movement for the scientific development of the art of public speaking, which had its origin, like the Sicilian rhetoric, in a fondness for bringing claims before the law. In Athens, however, the movement was also due to a law by which Athenian litigants were compelled to plead in person before the courts. This inevitably led to close inquiry into the right methods of stating a case, and shortly before Gorgias' visit, Aristotle had written his book on Rhetoric, with the definition now familiar to you. You can see by the history of rhetoric that it is indeed aimed at persuasion. A younger man than Aristotle, Isocrates, was also at that time teaching the art of public speaking. Indeed, the first teachers of the art, apart from the efforts of Tisias and others in Sicily, were active at this time, being known as the Sophists.

Since their first aim was the winning of legal cases, their methods were not always admirable, for they held any artifice to be proper which might score a point in their client's favour. Nevertheless, their ranks included speakers and teachers of merit.

200.

Isocrates opened a large school to train speakers, and became the first "ghost" to write speeches for others to deliver.

Aristotle's ideas prevailed in the teaching of the art for nearly three hundred years, and schools of rhetoric flourished in all the cultural centres of the civilised world. Later his principles were less regarded, and the best oratory was disfigured by florid passages and complicated devices, chiefly due to ideas on rhetoric coming from Asia. The Greeks remained the masters and best teachers of the art, and the Roman orators all adopted Greek models and principles. Cicero and Quintilian both tried to restore the Aristotelian methods, and Roman eloquence reached its highest perfection through their work. Throughout the Middle Ages rhetoric remained one of the most important studies in a young man's education. In modern times the attention paid to it is far from sufficient, the most serious attempts to study it and include it in educational curriculum going to the credit of America. In view of the enormous sums of money which are annually spent on education in the English-speaking countries, it is pitiful to see nine speakers out of every ten to-day reading their addresses, and reading them badly.

This outline of the history of rhetoric will help to keep clearly in mind that persuasion is the sole aim of rhetoric—*i.e.*, of the forms of public speaking you intend to practise. The history of the art is a continuous demonstration of the efforts which have been made to perfect it towards its purpose.



We return, then, to Aristotle's definition, to see what it covers. The philosopher tells us that there are three main roads along which the speaker may advance into the minds and hearts of his audience. The first is entirely intellectual—the road into the mind. It consists of arguments proving or disproving, to the satisfaction of your listeners' minds, the truth of a given proposition.

That this is not the only path by which you may approach your audience is evident, for we are made up of more than mind. We are complicated people, with a sense of duty which the conviction of the mind may not rouse. It is evident that when we are sure of a thing, we may be content to accept the fact and to do nothing about it. But if our moral sense is approached—our sense of duty and responsibility—we may easily pass from simple conviction to action. To ensure success, the speaker must be ready, at certain times, to impress our moral sense even more than our intellects.

For example, suppose that you have been asked to speak on behalf of a home for the blind. You may make your intellectual appeal by instancing the helplessness of the blind, the need of a new home for them, the desirability of opening an institution equipped with the latest means of aiding them to overcome their affliction. You might support your arguments by stating the statistics of blindness and give facts concerning the increase of the misfortune in the national or local community through war, disease or occupational risks. A speech on these lines would certainly succeed in raising funds.



Suppose, however, you were to add to the intellectual appeal a direct approach to the moral sense of your audience. You prove that many afflicted people are unable to earn their bread through want of accommodation in institutions for the blind. You quote local instances. You point out that we are not made wholly for ourselves, but owe a duty to our fellow-men to help them in their distress. Whether or not you bring in religious principles, you show that the man who will not help those less fortunate than himself, those who can show only a handicap where he can show both fitness and opportunity, is scarcely worthy of the name of man. It is certain that the success of your speech will be considerably increased by this method of approach to those whom you have been asked to influence.

You have now reached the audience in two ways. A third way is still open to you if you wish to advance along it. For we are people with emotions and, we may admit, it is often an emotion which moves us to action when intellectual conviction, or even a sense of duty, has failed to overcome our laziness or indifference. The speaker would be more than inefficient if he failed to make use, when necessary, of so powerful a means of persuasion as the appeal to human emotions.

Nor is it unfair that he should do so, for we take it for granted that he will not make an improper use of this power over people which is in his hands. It is possible to appeal to unworthy emotions and instincts, such as greed. All that sort of thing we leave out of consideration. The speaker appeals to

the nobler instincts of his audience, or condemns himself and rightly earns contempt. We can now take our example of your appeal for the blind a step farther. You have already roused your listeners to a sense of their responsibility towards those less fortunate than themselves; now you appeal to emotion.

“If you yourself became one of life’s victims, unable to provide for yourself and those dear to you, what would your position be? These men and women are in that position to-night. Would you regard a home which could teach you a new means of livelihood as a god-send? So will they, if you help to give it to them. Do you not feel better, more deeply contented, at the thought that you can give of what you have to these who, by no fault of their own, desperately need what you can so easily give them? Do you not wish to assist those who, for want of a suitably staffed home, must rely on unskilled help? Are you not yet more anxious to aid those unhappier people whose needs are deprived both of untrained care and of sympathetic understanding when really loving, patient attention is most required?”

Several appeals are in that outline, all of them fair and true. They complete the appeal you have been asked to make, since you have approached your audience’s mind, moral feelings and emotions.

Ladies, by the way, should be careful in making the third kind of appeal. An appeal to emotion is not an emotional appeal. Any show of emotion can embarrass an audience, so that it should be



made with restraint and, often, with a deliberate slowness of speech. The climax of the appeal should certainly be slowly spoken. Its height may be marked by a slight pause or a quiet gesture, but with nothing more disturbing to people's feelings than that.

These ideas lead us to two further reflections. The first concerns yourself in relation to your audience. People have come to listen to your ideas, and they naturally expect that these ideas will be mirrored in yourself. The point seems almost too obvious for mention, but experience shows that speakers must be warned to preserve an appearance in keeping with the purpose of their speech. You would not rise to congratulate a bridal couple with the same appearance as you would condole with the bereaved. Yet some speakers are careless both of their personal appearance and of their dress and manner.

The second reflection concerns your audience in relation to you. Before you decide on the exact subject of your address, try to get into touch with the mentality of those who are to hear it. If you know something of them, it is an advantage. Even if you have not met this particular audience before, you will be able to tell something about it, partly because of your subject and partly because of the characteristics common to classes of people. For example, your subject may be highly controversial, and you may be due to discuss it in a district where your aspect of it is unpopular. Or you may know that your audience will consist for the most part of housewives. Thus you can estimate in advance the



audience's probable reaction or probable likes and dislikes.

It is important to try to see your audience as you prepare your speech. Will it be angry or friendly? Highly intelligent or more ordinary from that point of view? Will it be coldly business-like or easily moved by an appeal to the emotions? What can you suppose are its reasons for meeting to listen to you? Must your approach be mostly intellectual, moral or emotional? All these questions help you to prepare an address which will influence the particular audience you are to face. It is a great mistake to imagine that one speech on one subject can be given anywhere and everywhere. A lecture could be given like that, perhaps, but if you want to reach the maximum success as a speaker, you must fit your speech as closely to each audience you address as foresight can make it fit.

If it is quite impossible to estimate your audience in advance, your best plan is to present yourself and your subject in a plain, straightforward way. Shakespeare understood the wisdom of this course when he wrote the great speech, to which we will refer many times in this book, for Mark Antony. Cæsar's friend did not know how his audience would react to his appearance, still less could he foresee its reaction to his subject. Therefore he told the mob,

"I am no orator, as Brutus is;  
But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,  
That love my friend".

There also are you before an unknown audience, candid, plain, and friendly towards all.

By considering yourself and your audience, you can check any conclusions you had reached about the kind of address to prepare. You enable yourself to consider a speech well calculated to work on minds and wills. Then at last you may go forward to the actual task of preparation, reasonably sure that your estimates are correct and able, by the means this book will show you, to let your words wing their way, clear, living, powerful messengers. Yours will be the

“Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn”.

(Gray: *Progress of Poesy*, Bk. 3.)

## CHAPTER III

### REMOTE SPEECH PREPARATION

IN the last chapter we saw that Corax in Sicily divided a speech into five sections. Nowadays we divide it into three, and we may also divide the preparation of a speech into three stages: the Remote, Preliminary and Immediate. There is definite work to be done in each stage, and it must be patiently and carefully done if a successful address is to result. If you are a beginner, this may sound rather slow and formidable, but there is really nothing to become alarmed about. For not only will a good deal of this work become habitual with you, but you know that any worthwhile job requires careful preparation. Perhaps you drive a car and have painful recollections of the early days when you learned gear-changing. Later you realised that you could learn in a quarter of an hour all you needed to know. It was the practice that took days and perhaps weeks, before you could be certain of a silent gear-change every time. By then the change had become so natural to you that you accomplished it almost without realising what movements you were performing. It is exactly the same with those infinitely painful scales on the piano keyboard which even-

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tually made you the musician of natural and smooth technique. If you want a measure of the difficulty now before you, you can take it that the preparation of your early speeches will require as much patience as gear-changing, but far less than you had to give to those scales. If you neglect it, you can no more complain of a breakdown than the motorist or pianist who ends up in the hedge or with twisted fingers, which is an embarrassing position, easily avoided by ordinary care and patience at the beginning.

The Remote Preparation of a speech begins with the speaker's own habits of collecting and thinking over facts. He may have gathered a store of facts in his mind, and it is from this store, which general reading and listening have given him, that he will draw the material he needs for his addresses. More important than this accumulation, however, are his own observations and the thought which he has given to the facts. The reason for this is that, as a speaker, he will be more concerned with imparting ideas than facts, which are the A, B, C behind ideas.

A speaker can always look up details, even at short notice. But he cannot see their full significance at short notice. To convince an audience of his own point of view he must have had the details of his speech in mind for a considerable time, so that his mind has had opportunity to think them over and penetrate their full significance. Clearly this mental process is an essential part of speech preparation. The speaker must have that

habit of mind which automatically selects and records items which may be useful to him professionally, and of considering them at leisure.

This process is not only necessary to him, but to his audience, for while he has ample time for the assimilation of knowledge, his audience has only the fifteen or thirty minutes of his address to understand, value and accept the facts he puts before it. It is his duty, then, to present his facts and conclusions as a sort of pre-digested mental food which the minds of his audience can readily absorb. This kind of food he cannot offer unless he is constantly turning over in his mind what he reads, sees or hears. Nor would he have any depth of thought to offer listeners unless he had the habit of thinking himself.

The Remote Preparation of a speech (and you will readily see how this part of it can become an easy, pleasant habit) requires a speaker to allow facts to pass through his mind as through a filter. His mind retains all the items which it can accept as genuine, sorts them out according to their various degrees of importance, and gradually becomes familiar with what we can call their shape. By that process, what is in his mind takes on something of that mind. Knowledge, composed of numerous tiny facts, passes through it like sunlight through a stained-glass window. The mind definitely adds something to those facts, because it is a living, thinking machine. As a result, when he transmits them to others, he passes on also something of himself, of his own outlook and character.



That is what makes him an individual speaker, with something personal to offer.

Anyone who has grasped the importance of this first part of Remote Preparation has at his command an adequate mental stock without which he cannot venture to speak in public, except on an extremely limited range of subjects. Moreover, as the last paragraph shows, he has gained the secret of popularity as a speaker. As an example of this, let me give you an experience of my own.

About eight years ago I wrote a rather informal lecture on literature in a small area of Yorkshire. The subject interested me, and I had, in the previous few years, read rather out of the way publications of authors hailing from that district or sometimes resident in it. When recovering from an illness, I amused myself by gathering together my impressions, and finally wrote this address, timed to last about forty minutes. Shortly afterwards I used it to meet an invitation to speak on a literary subject. Fortunately, I kept the manuscript, for that lecture has been asked for repeatedly. Wherever I am there is someone who has attended one or other of its deliveries, and the now familiar question arrives: "I am a member of such-and-such a society. I wonder whether you would give us a talk? Perhaps that one you gave on 'A Literary Trip in Yorkshire'." On the very day which is being devoted to the writing of this chapter I have been invited to deliver it for the third time in York alone, to the members of the Inner Wheel.

I attribute the popularity of this talk to the fact



that it is so personal to me that it has been possible to give to it that indefinable quality which a speech gains if its facts have had plenty of time to pass through the mind. In my case, the facts were being gathered and assimilated for nearly three years before I had any thought of speaking about them. A good example of Remote Preparation. You could speak in the same way about at least one of the many subjects which have interested you in the past, whether it be of exciting adventures or economics.

Lord Northcliffe, who had an almost uncanny gift for knowing what people like to read and hear, once expressed the truth we are thinking about now by saying, "What people want is information". Here he certainly used the word *information* in its widest sense. It implies not only facts, but also their meaning. This is easily seen if we ask what success a speaker might have if he were to recite a multiplication table. His aim might be to persuade people that twice two are four, but he would speak in an empty hall. But if he understood exactly why twice two are four and could explain the fact in a simple and pleasing way, the hall would be crowded. It is the ability to understand the meaning of facts and to express clearly what is understood that explains why popularity necessarily attaches to books like Lancelot Hogben's "Mathematics for the Million". That book did not give a great deal of absolutely new information to many of its readers; it was the information which came with the statement of fact which made it absorb-

ingly interesting. The same truth is exemplified by the endless publication of popular books, articles and serials explaining many things with which we are already superficially familiar. People like to know the "why" of everything, and this is the reason why they buy books of "All About Pets" and the similar booklets on everything from carnations to ballet.

Please do not think that you need to be learned in order to satisfy this popular desire to get behind facts to their significance. Often it is the learned who cannot give the quality to their addresses which makes them valuable to people other than specialists and scholars. As a man experienced in this work wrote to me recently, "There is no reason why even a learned person cannot succeed" in this work of reaching the minds of ordinary people in an interesting way. Rather a neat way of assuring anyone that deep scholarship is not required of the public speaker. You must have that knowledge which is above the average, while not necessarily as complete as the specialist's. This truth holds good whether your address is about astronomy, pudding-making or statistics for a Board Meeting.

You will probably have realised by now that Remote Preparation includes a realisation of the connection between facts. I hinted at it when I said that the mind must have time to discover the shape of facts. In other words, it perceives how facts fit together like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. This point implies two things which must be noticed: that the speaker should be aware of the links between



facts, and that he should definitely express these links throughout his speech. Many a speaker has robbed himself of success by assuming that his audience could see the connections between the items made known by him, whereas the listeners had been left far behind in the effort to follow him.

Always remember that the listener, unlike the reader, cannot go back to see something which he thinks he has missed. Every link between facts must be definitely expressed, or the listener may be puzzled because he cannot see how B follows A. Nor can he interrupt the speaker to ask for the connection between the two. In fact, he may believe that there is no valid connection by which B can be said to follow A, and any further effort to persuade him at the G, H stage of the address will be completely wasted.

We sum up the first part of Remote Preparation by saying that before you face your audience you must know all the relevant facts, understand their meaning and connections, and be ready to express them in simple and definite terms.

Now we look back a number of years, to childhood, and see there something which is as true of us to-day as it was then. This is that we like our facts to be accompanied by illustrations. An example not only helps us to grasp a fact more quickly, but it helps us to remember it. It is an axiom that people remember illustrations long after they have forgotten the rest of what they read or hear. That would be depressing were our example not specially prepared to convey the fact

also. That is the importance of an example. It must really belong to a fact and portray it. In this book you will be reminded again and again that the story which is dragged into a speech were far better left out, because if it is remembered the point it was fastened on to will not be remembered. But if the story and the idea were inseparable, you would be sure that the fact would stay in the memory as long as the illustration.

The use of illustration will be dealt with in its proper place. Here we make this point of the unity which must exist between the illustration and its allied fact, because it is evident that such perfect illustrations are not easily found. In other words, they must be drawn from Remote Preparation, from the store which every speaker is building for himself every day. Even the most carefully selected illustration rarely fits our need completely. *Omnis comparatio claudicat*—every comparison limps. That is a saying almost as old as rhetoric itself. The speaker who tries to find proper examples at the last minute will certainly fail; so will his speech. He should have at command a stock of them which will always provide him with what he needs for his immediate purposes.

To assure yourself of the need for illustration, judge for yourself the success of the speaker who says, "Think for a minute of the condition of a starving man, and I am sure you will give generously to this Fund for the Relief of War Victims", and the man who expresses the same thing in a more visual way: "See this victim of starvation; the



bloated body, the shrivelled arms and stick-like legs; the sunken eyes burning in their sockets and the black lips." He does not need to ask for money if he can show starvation like that.

Of course, there is another point about which an audience likes assurance. A fluent, vivid speaker may exercise a powerful influence over his audience only if there is assurance that he speaks authoritatively. Unless he is a publicly acknowledged authority on his subject, his listeners will want to know what weight lies behind his remarks. In certain subjects, admittedly, this desire will not be present—*e.g.*, if the speaker is talking about something which the audience knows he has experienced, or about something which is equally familiar to it as to him, such as the appearance of the stars on a clear night. Apart from situations like these, a speaker must quote his authorities. One advantage of his doing so is that it is equivalent to giving the audience the benefit of a second opinion. Another is the sense of security it provides to both speaker and audience.

The importance of authority is suggested to you by the practice of editors in securing "big names" for their articles. The unknown specialist has little chance of entering the popular Press if a name familiar to the public can provide information on his subject. Indeed, the practice is so bad, and people apparently are so willing to accept almost anything from a "big name", that one repeatedly sees articles on religion by scientists, on science by literary artists, and on moral issues by chemists.

All that matters, one gathers, is that the writer should be an authority of some kind on something.

This custom provides us with a lesson and a warning. Have your authorities at your disposal, but make sure that they are authorities on the subjects for which you quote them. This is the only honest and practical thing to do, apart from the fact that people who come to listen to speeches are usually more intelligent and alert than the ordinary reader who skims a week-end periodical chiefly for entertainment.

Up to this point we have been thinking of collecting facts and illustrations. It will be useful if we pause to look at the system behind the gathering of a collection. What has been said may have given you the impression that you will spend the greater part of every day with pen in hand, sitting in a room lined with filing cabinets and card-index boxes. Nothing could be farther from the truth. After years of public speaking, I have a good collection of all sorts of items which may be needed, but it is all packed away in a small space. If you were to come into my room you would not notice my collection, although it is all visible. There is a small card index and several containers holding large envelopes, and a small pile of cuttings for certain specialised subjects. The larger part of the collection is still maintained on the same system with which it began.

The best thing to do is to buy a few dozen large manila envelopes. Into these you put your cuttings, notes and memoranda, classifying them by writing



on the flap of the envelope the name of the subject to which they refer. The envelopes are then kept in alphabetical order. You can get a vast amount of information into a hundred envelopes!

Before your reference library has reached that size, you had better buy your card index and start the task of cross indexing. This is necessary because many of the items you file away are useful to more than one of your subjects. This makes it necessary to enter it on several cards. If you look up "Ginger" in my index, you will find references to *bread*, *De la Pole*, *Hull*, *Birmingham*, because it is connected with all four subjects. The exact references are found by looking up the cards referred to. By this method you are able to see at a glance all the facts you have gathered about any item in your collection.

Of course, you will gather much more in your professional store than you are ever likely to need, unless you deliberately restrict it to a few subjects. But it is better to have more than your needs require than too little, and it may safely be said that, if you intend to speak on many subjects, your store cannot be too large.

It may appear to you as though all this Remote Preparation is indeed remote, but you must agree that it is essential. Now we come to stages of it which are visibly nearer the actual moment when you will rise to your feet before the audience. That time is still a long way off, but we are certainly advancing towards it, for we come to the moment when you choose the subject of your address.

You have at your disposal a mass of facts relative \

to many subjects, with illustrations and authorities to accompany them. But what is the subject to be? Most people in your position would immediately think of the subject they are most interested in as the one they will first deal with. And this would be wise, because, of the rules which should guide a speaker in his choice of a subject, one of the first is that he must choose something in which he is interested himself. If he is speaking by invitation on an appointed subject, the rule still holds, for no one in his senses would hope to be persuasive about something which had no degree of fascination for him personally. Guided by your own inclination, you turn to your list of possible subjects and choose one or two of them. They appeal to you, and you have, as a result, a good chance of making them appeal to somebody else. "Enthusiasm invites enthusiasm."

If you have an ardent enthusiasm for something, you will scarcely fail to kindle enthusiasm in your audience. Consequently you must make it a rule either to choose your own subjects or, if a choice is not offered to you, choose an aspect of the proposed subject which holds a definite interest for you. If you are asked to speak about Sport, the possibility of your finding at least one aspect of it, if not one whole sport, makes the task easy. Yet, on reflection, you will see that even if a subject of much less variety is proposed to you, you have many possible lines of approach for exploration. For instance, if you are asked to take Clothing for subject, you can consider whether you will talk



about clothing at a period of history, in a certain country, changes of fashion, clothing and health, the usefulness of fashion. The list could be considerably extended. Or if the subject is much narrower in scope, such as a talk on one book, you can still choose between talking about the book in relation to other writings of the same author, the difference between the book and similar works by other authors, its prose style, its social message, its relationship to the life of the author, its results on public opinion or thought. So you can go on analysing the subject until you find at least one aspect of it which interests you. Make the fullest use of the variety which examination shows to be latent in every subject, and your speech will be easier for you and more successful.

Having gone at least some of the way towards deciding the problem of subject by the guidance of your own interest, you must let another rule influence you—that the subject be one which will interest your audience. It may seem to you most improbable that anyone would decide to address people about something which would not attract their attention. Well, if that is your view at the moment, think of some of the speeches you have had to sit through, and you will admit that far too often a speaker's enthusiasm for his pet subjects has rushed him into a speech which no one enjoyed except himself. I remember once hearing a man speak (and he spoke remarkably well, as far as ideas and words were concerned) on the need for good elocution. Unluckily, he trotted out this favourite for

exercise at a School Prize Day, when studies were over and everyone was thinking of summer sunshine holidays. All the hoary jokes about looking forward to next term's work had been made, and everyone was enjoying the annual chestnuts and traditional customs, when this speaker rose to his feet. As I said, it was a good speech, except that it had the completely destructive fault of having no interest for his audience that day. He was never asked to speak again, although he attended Prize Day for years after that and, I often thought, was pained and puzzled at not being asked to speak.

Remember always to check your own interest by that of those who are going to be at your mercy for anything from five to forty minutes.

If you think you have found something which will interest them as well as yourself, the best thing is to see whether it is something of which you have personal experience. This is not the same thing as saying, "Never speak about something you have not experienced yourself". But it does say that, other considerations being equal, you should prefer the thing you can talk about from first-hand experience. As an example of this rule, suppose that an audience wanted to hear all about the survival for three weeks of a shipwrecked crew in the Indian Ocean. You would make the description as vivid as possible and, after a close study of all available records, you would set out your remarks in the most telling language at your command. Now let us suppose that, after you had referred to an act of heroism by which a man was saved from the mad-



ness of thirst, a man rose in your audience and said, "That were me". Which of you two would the audience want to listen to?

The man is ungrammatical and probably indistinct in elocution; he has had no time to prepare the order of his address. Yet the audience would rather have a ten-minute talk from that sailor than half an hour of your best eloquence. His personal experience outweighs all your qualifications in the balance of their opinion.

The same truth is shown you by the popularity of talks illustrated by lantern slides, whether they are travel talks or familiar lectures on astronomy. The thing which gives them their value is that an element of personal experience is added to the spoken word. The speaker may have visited Jerusalem or have seen the rings of Saturn through a telescope, and he may have the gifts of genius for describing what he has seen. He will be wise if he adds to his words slides or a film which allow the audience to see with its eyes what he has pictured for its ears. He will give it personal experience in as personal a way as it can approach the subject.

You have so far learned three rules which guide your choice of subject. The fourth rule tells you to choose one for which you have many facts available. Most of this rule has already been explained earlier in this chapter. It is mentioned here in order to add to it the advice that it will be a good thing always to take as your subject something for which you have more facts than you can use. If you know more about it than can be fitted into one

address, you know enough about it. Indeed, if you have any doubt about this rule, remain silent. Lowell wittily expressed the rule in the words, "Blessed is he who has nothing to say, and cannot be persuaded to say it".

Finally, we must mention a rule which beginners do not need. It is only when you have gained confidence and experience that you will need to be told always to choose a subject which can be fitted into the allotted time. By then, unhappily, there will be no one bold enough to tell you this, unless a falling off in the number of your speaking engagements warns you. So learn this rule well now, and if the evil of excessive length comes upon you in the days of success, be humble enough to remember and apply it.

We may note here that ladies are alleged to be the most frequent offenders against this rule. In my experience, if we exclude ladies who rise to speak, without proper preparation, at meetings of their local societies, the charge is ill-founded. The fault is commonly found amongst the experienced speakers whose knowledge is fairly extensive and whose confidence is great. They entirely forget that it takes the gifts of a rhetorical genius to make people ignore their tiredness and the hardness of their seats.

Here you can make a mental note to hasten towards the end of your address, if a time limit has not been suggested to you in advance, as soon as one or two members of the audience begin to show signs of tiredness. It quickly spreads among those sitting before you, and you may safely take it that atten-



tion vanishes rapidly after you have noticed the first wriggle of discomfort. There is a rather impolite but most wholesome piece of advice which governs more than one rule of the speaker's art: "Stand up, speak up, then shut up".

The proposed length of your speech must be kept in mind throughout your work of preparation, or you will certainly fail to observe the suitable limits. You can omit certain aspects of your subject, which are the less essential to your purpose in speaking, or you can deal with your points briefly, as a method of keeping within the proposed time. Municipal Affairs, for instance, is a wide subject to discuss in fifteen minutes, but you might very successfully, within that time, talk about some of the opportunities open to ladies in municipal life. If you really intend to keep within the due limits, you may do some bad timing at first, but you will presently find that you can time an address to within a couple of minutes. Several speakers I knew made an agreement by which they fined themselves one shilling for every minute they spoke beyond the appointed time. It was expensive occasionally, but an excellent custom.

The next step forward brings us to Preliminary Speech Preparation. However impatient you may be to take it, do not move on until you are master of the ideas put before you in this chapter.



## CHAPTER IV

### PRELIMINARY PREPARATION

WHEN you reach the preliminary stage of speech preparation, you have already decided the subject to put before your audience. Here many speakers (one sometimes suspects, most speakers) leave the question of subject and pass to immediate preparation. The process is exactly like mixing ingredients chosen at random and hoping to make a Christmas cake. Your guests may be too polite to tell you what they think of the result, but they will avoid both your addresses and your Christmas parties in future.

To make the cake, you must first ask yourself exactly what kind of cake you want to set before your guests. Then you think of the recipe and find the ingredients which it says are required. The making of a speech is very like this process—don't be shocked at the likening of speech-making to cooking or baking; Plato wrote of it nearly two thousand years ago. You must ask yourself, "What is my exact subject?" That is to say, having decided the subject, you ask yourself what is the precise purpose of your address. Is it wholly to give information? Is it to stir your listeners to action? Do you intend only to entertain them? Question yourself until you are clear in mind as to why you



are speaking on this subject to this audience. Establish for yourself the General Purpose of the speech.

When that problem is settled beyond doubt, you discover the Particular Purpose which is somewhere at the back of your mind. Your General Purpose may cover many Particular Purposes. For instance, you may give an address on Singing, with the General Purpose of showing that families or groups of friends can form small singing clubs for their own entertainment. Your Particular Purpose may be (to choose a few such purposes at random): to encourage the growth of these clubs in the district; to promote a better knowledge of vocal music among people who are already interested in choral work; to suggest an interesting method of practice; to raise funds for the local Male Voice Choir; to form a system by which some big local choir may be fed by new talent.

Your General Purpose is thus seen to be given direction by the Particular Purpose behind it. Any indefiniteness of purpose will certainly prevent your speech from being the best that is in you to deliver. It may be pronounced a success; only you will have the depressing knowledge that you could have done better with ten minutes more care and thought during Preliminary Preparation.

From now onwards every step in the preparation of the speech is governed by your two Purposes. Nothing should come into the address which is irrelevant to your General Purpose, nothing which can alter or in the least deflect the direction of your Particular Purpose. You must not admit into your consideration any illustration, statement of fact,

quotation or simile which is not in full harmony with the purposes already decided. However unusual, interesting or striking that stray item may be, it will momentarily distract your audience and inevitably lessen your influence over it. Where individuals are concerned it may do even greater harm, for every audience includes people who lose confidence in the speaker as soon as they notice that he has wandered from his purpose. A good example of this came to me after a friend and I had listened to a successful address on Marriage. My friend's comment was, "He mentioned over thirty different items in that address, most of them off the point". That was the only thing that mattered to him. He had noticed the speaker's habit of bringing in the odd item which was not essential to his purpose, and had spent the rest of the half-hour in counting these faults.

After clearing your mind for action by deciding your Main and Particular Purposes and by fitting everything to them, you continue the choice of items for inclusion by applying a test to each. Will this fact, story or whatever it may be, promote my Particular Purpose? It will not interfere with it, but what value has it in actually furthering it? Every sentence you plan must bring that purpose, in one form or another, into the minds and hearts of those who hear you. Sometimes you will hammer the point home, at another time you will suggest it gently. All the time you will keep putting it into the people before you, like water dripping on a stone. If you are speaking about Total Abstinence,



for instance, you might begin by pointing out that no one can, in practice, be undecided in this matter. He must either be a total abstainer or not. By this statement you have already got your audience on the move. They are dividing into the two camps, but many of them will still be wondering which camp to approach. This is where your initiative is needed to keep up the movement you have started, and to propose the arguments which you believe will move a number of people in the direction you wish, the direction of your Particular Purpose. It may not be to ask them to choose between being themselves total abstainers or not. Your opening point could fit in with a number of other purposes.

We may now think of a more detailed example. Suppose that your General Purpose is to encourage interest in the welfare of men injured in war. Your Particular Purpose is to collect funds for a War Hospital. The means you choose for this end is to ask for a minimum contribution of one shilling, either at a collection taken during the meeting or at the exits from the hall. Stop reading for a minute, and use your pencil to note down a few ideas on this subject. Take your time. What ideas occur to you as useful for furthering the end you have set yourself as your Particular Purpose? The number of wounded men needing help? The small number of hospitals available for them? The total of so many shillings in relation to a hospital's work? Go on thinking and find something really telling. When you have made your list of ways and means for securing what you want, read on.

No doubt your list is a good one, and this paragraph is written only to give you something with which to compare your ideas and methods for instruction's sake. It would be a good thing to focus attention entirely on that shilling you want. "It will mean only one drink less this week, one packet of cigarettes less, a cheaper seat in the cinema for one visit only. What will that little effort cost each of us? We will never notice it, except to feel pleased we made it. That shilling is going to be spent on something you could do without, something you'll never need. It isn't so much a shilling as a magazine, a packet of sweets, a tip in a restaurant. But all those shillings mean radium treatment for somebody who is in pain, better food for someone in need of strength, a pack of cards for someone who has forgotten what a cinema looks like, wireless for someone who hasn't seen his own fireside for a year."

This is putting it straight and without chance of anyone missing your meaning. Now change the method a little.

"A snowflake is about the smallest, frailest thing you ever meet. It is weaker even than a feather, since it melts away. But many snowflakes block roads, isolate villages, hold up vans of food and mail, halt trains, break down houses. The little snowflake has power in it, like your shilling. By itself that shilling is useless to meet the needs of the wounded. Then put it to somebody else's; put it to everyone else's. Make up the fund we need for these men! Snow them under with shillings!"

People are reaching for their pockets before you



have got to the end of this part of your speech, without thought of whatever else you may have in mind to say.

There is the outline of Preliminary Preparation. First establish your General and Particular Purposes, then plan the means you are going to use to promote them. Accept or reject every idea that comes to you by the test of whether it fits in with your aim.

The two examples given here were made up for the purpose, so we close with a celebrated example from oratory. During the election campaign of 1858, Abraham Lincoln went to Springfield to seek votes. That was his General Purpose. He decided to gain those votes on the Slavery issue. That was his Particular Purpose. The means he chose for promoting his aim was that slavery must be accepted by all the American States or by none of them. In view of the threat of civil war, which came less than three years later, Lincoln's statement was incontestable. Unity there must be, and it could come only by all agreeing to the existence or the abolition of slavery. "Vote for me and its abolition", was his conclusion.

There is an example of a perfectly planned speech. Once the plan was formed, the speaker had only to find the facts and motives required for its support. Lincoln found them, and the votes.

## CHAPTER V

### IMMEDIATE PREPARATION

IF you were going to fight a duel, you would choose your weapon with care. If you decided to use a sword, your next anxiety would be to select the right kind of sword to suit you for this particular job, and you would keep your adversary in mind, too, in choosing your type. You would select one that you could use with skill and, if this also could be foreseen, one which your opponent would find difficulty in meeting. In speech-making, your audience is usually your ally, and it is not to be suggested that you should regard it as anything else. At the same time it is to be placed under your influence, and you will naturally fashion a weapon best suited to your talents and adapted to find the susceptibilities of your listeners.

Your Immediate Preparation is the fashioning of this weapon. First look to your raw materials. Sit down to gather round you all the facts, illustrations, statistics, etc., bearing on your subject, and then sort them out according to their value when tested by the Purposes of your speech. When you have ransacked your reference library (whether you store it in manila envelopes or not!), sort out the facts according to the following classification.

(a) *Definition of your Subject.* This helps you to



gain a clear idea, at least for your audience's sake. Here we can take the definition you might use if you were to speak on Peace, which you might define as harmony between nations, preserved by normal diplomatic relations.

(b) *The Qualities of your Subject.* Under this heading you collect those qualities which promote your Particular Purpose. If your purpose in speaking of Peace is to advocate an international Council for the Preservation of Peace, you might here gather such items as: Peace requires conciliation and arbitration; it needs a Council where conflicting views can be discussed openly as well as through diplomatic channels; it requires a central body for the protection of small nations; it demands some central organisation for equalising, by artificial means, the advantages of certain countries in natural resources and wealth; it needs open discussion of economic problems and adjustments.

(c) *Evidences concerning the Subject.* In this category you place quotations from authorities. These quotations will illustrate its nature, qualities, results, causes, etc. Remember that the items here are not bringing forward new facts, but giving reliable backing to facts collected under the other headings of your preparation. You will gather quotations from all the authorities you know, ancient and modern, from books and speeches, from science and art, personal experience, too, if your experience can be regarded as authoritative. Do not overlook the value of familiar quotations, which often express a truth neatly and memorably. In your address

on Peace, for instance, you might quote, "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war", which Milton addressed to Oliver Cromwell.

(d) *Fallacies concerning your Subject.* That is, the mistakes which usually arise through too much attention to one aspect of anything. You can also include views about your subject which are manifestly not in accordance with reality, and arguments opposed to your purpose which you believe to be based on a mistake. In our example, you might here instance the fallacies that a central Council for the Preservation of Peace does little work in proportion to the money it spends; that it is unable to influence international quarrels; that, in a practical view, Might is Right.

(e) *Instances and Examples.* This category needs little explanation. There will always be plenty of illustrations to support your purpose if you take the thought to find them. In the example we are following you might instance the League of Nation's work for stateless people after the war of 1914-18; the mandates system; or, from history, the principles of the Hanscatic League.

(f) *Causes, Helps and Hindrances.* This is another classification which explains itself. Peace is caused by good-will, honest diplomacy, honest international trading, fair economic adjustments between nations. You can extend the list. It is helped by various natural phenomena, such as bountiful harvests (here your point in the example we are following, can be that a central Council can regulate world distribution), and hindered by greed for territory



or power (which the Council would be a well-informed body in watching and checking). The scope of the facts you can gather under this head is great.

(g) *Description of your Subject.* This category provides one of your most important sources in speech preparation. It can be briefly described, but it requires a wide search through your reference library. The category is best examined by dividing it into Extent (in time and space) and Inter-connection between the parts of your subject. Take them individually:—

1. Extent in time. Referring to peace, with special reference to organisations for its preservation, you turn to history. Perhaps here you can visit the local library, if there is nothing suitable on your shelves, to borrow a book on the subject. Or your own knowledge and references may provide you with all you need—we have already mentioned the League of Nations and the Hanseatic League as worth consideration. In addition, you might bring in as relevant the famous *Pax Romana*—the Peace of Rome—making your point that wherever the Roman armies brought the discipline of their Empire, they brought peace. Unity and discipline are means for securing peace. The Confederation of the United States, resulting in the Constitution of to-day, with its over-all unity and individual State freedom, might also, contribute something useful to your address.

Half-an-hour's thought and reference will make your speech as full of meat as an egg.

2. Extent in Place. What do you know and what can you find out with reference to the universality of Peace? Perhaps it may occur to you to introduce a pleasing note by mentioning the peace which reigned universally at the time of Christ's birth; you might refer to man's frequent efforts to create a space in which peace might be preserved—*e.g.*, the attempts to build a lasting civilisation which we see in the building of the Great Wall of China, in the conquests of the Roman emperor Alexander or the Mongol warrior Genghis Khan. You might refer to M. Briand's proposals for a United States of Europe. The point can be completed by an examination of how far these attempts succeeded or might have done so, and why they failed. You then apply the truths discovered by this process to the Peace Council you are advocating.

3. Inter-connection between parts of Subject. You will need clear thinking here (which is good fun, and not hard work), for if you make a mistake and link facts together wrongly, you may unwittingly destroy the purpose of your speech. In our example you can consider the connection between the preservation of Peace and money, international trade, munition industries, racial and ideological theories. There are many lines of development before you under this heading. Make the fullest use of them, because



the more facts you have to choose from, the more striking will be the few finally selected.

4. Changes occurring in your Subject are to be noticed. You will, of course, note those changes which further the Purpose of your speech. Once again care is needed, for it is easy to quote a change which mature thought will show does not really advance your cause at all. Sift the ideas which come to you, and make sure you have seen all round them before you set them aside for use. Scientific changes in the means of waging war will provide you with a strong line of argument for a Peace Council. Every century has seen the world in greater need of security, you may state. The invention of gunpowder basically altered war; the progress of aviation enormously increased war's destructiveness; release of nuclear energy has made man decide between war and peace as between complete destruction and survival. Or you may take another line of thought, arguing that Peace itself has changed. Formerly it consisted of the integrity of national boundaries, whereas to-day, when means of rapid transport have made boundaries almost non-existent, Peace is more like the harmony which used to be prevalent inside countries. All States are nearer to one State, and war is like civil war. A fruitful idea to encourage.

5. State the Hopes, Fears, Aims and Future of your Subject. This source of ideas explains

A great masterpiece of Rees Westland.

itself. In our example, a Peace Council may be said to be the chief hope for Peace, national or *bloc* agreements may be held to be its greatest danger; security and personal liberty for the individual may be seen to be an important aim in the struggle to preserve peace, and you can form your own opinion as to the future prospects of success or failure. Other ideas which will appear under this heading are unwillingness to disclose new weapons of war, willingness to share the medical and educational benefits of scientific progress, the possibility of the frightfulness of war being a preventive. These and many other thoughts wait for your valuation and selection.

6. As your mass of speech material continues to increase by this method of examination, you think of the Effects of your Subject. An inter-national Peace Council, you think, may result in many blessings for the millions of little men in the world, in security for their children, good education, wealthy State services for communal welfare and happiness, the exchange of the products of the good earth in world-wide business. Here you can draw a vivid picture of the air fleets of the world bringing the fruits of world production in exchange to every country. Or you may look at the opposite picture: what those same fleets would bring to man if peace broke down.

7. Finally you gather your Parallels, Comparisons and Contrasts. This is another generous



source of materials in speech-making. Whatever stands in one of these relationships to your subject (and your purpose, remember) may be noted. Peace is like good health in the body, and its Council is the world's physician. Its aim is preservation rather than cure. The Peace Council may be contrasted with the struggle of national groups pushing their own selfish interest. You may find something useful in the comparison between the law of the jungle and the disciplined, united life of the perfect State, the bee-hive.

You can now see how the search for material by this system results in a flow of ideas and examples which is like a flood. It provides far more than you can possibly use in one speech, so that you are free to choose from the notes you have gathered the best and most suitable to your Particular Purpose.

You are ready to enter on the stage of preparation which has been called the stage of self-sacrifice. It has been given this name because you will often find that some of the ideas or illustrations you most wish to use have to be rejected as not the best calculated to further your purpose. You may think of an example, for instance, which appeals greatly to your imagination. There is no doubt that you could express it in colourful and unforgettable phrases. Unfortunately, it is not quite so telling as an example which you will find more difficult to handle. You must be firm with yourself, and labour with that less attractive idea until you can

express it as well as the other. Don't be downhearted about it. The labour will do more good in the end, and the self-discipline involved in it will benefit you. They will certainly increase your ability as a speaker.

There is also a certain amount of sacrifice in discarding a good deal of material because its use will either over-crowd your speech or will take you beyond the time set for the speech. To be candid, we all like being able to show how much we know. It is a great temptation, especially to a beginner, to show a wide range of facts and thoughts. In itself the effort is impressive, or we are inclined to think it is. In fact, however, we weary our listeners, confuse them by putting far more into their minds than they can think about in a comparatively short time, and thus we confuse the issue completely. Make it a rule that, when your material has been gathered, you will use no more of it than is necessary to win the day. It is not always possible to foresee how much will be necessary, but you can always keep a few extra points in mind to draw upon if a reserve is needed.

This brings in the debate between those who believe in the use of fully-written speeches and those who rely on the extempore method of speaking. It is difficult to bring in the reserve ideas, if you suddenly find they are needed, when you are tied to a written speech. There is an answer to this argument, but we cannot break our study of speech-preparation methods to enter the debate now. You will find the dispute fully stated in Chapter XII.



At the moment we merely note the fact that, whether or not you adopt a method of speaking which allows sudden changes or the introduction of reserve ideas when you find that your audience needs more persuasion than you expected, you must not in the preparation of your speech work in everything your search for material yielded.

By now you are drawing near the end of your Immediate Preparation of the speech. All your materials have been found, in all their variety and comparative values. The next job is to prepare an Outline for your speech. Do it methodically, as follows. Subject, General Purpose, Particular Purpose, Means. Then come Introduction, Body (Main Point, second Main Point, etc.), Conclusion. It will be easier for you to see how your material is worked in if we make an Outline for that speech on a Peace Council which we have so far followed as an example in this chapter.

### Speech Plan or Outline

Subject: An Inter-national Peace Council.

General Purpose: Peace must be preserved.

✓ Particular Purpose: This can best be done by an International Peace Council.

Means: Here mention the exact type of Council you have in mind, such as a League of Nations or a Federation of Nations, or whatever else is your idea.

Introduction: Definition of Peace; definition of a Council such as you have in mind.

Body of Speech: Main Point 1: The world needs universal peace or must face destruction.

Supporting Point i: The causes of war are still with us—greed, money lust, unequal natural distribution of wealth, distrust, secret agreements.

Supporting Point ii:—Causes of peace are still with us: people's desire for open dealing, longing for peace, favourable conditions at the moment.

Supporting Point iii:—These two sets of causes need a machine to bring them together and, by control and development, keep them in harmony.

Main Point 2: No other form of control will preserve Peace.

Supporting Point i: Examples of success in the past.

Supporting Point ii: Why they failed and how this lesson can benefit a new Council.

Conclusion: Work now for the Peace Council.

This is the smallest outline, and is deliberately left without detailed expansion so that you can look back over the points we discovered during the search for material, and work in more of them by way of exercise. Not all are really suitable, as you will find, but others are very striking and to the point. Again, you might have the Conclusion here as a Main Point 3, with means of promoting the Council as your Supporting Points. Your Conclusion would then be one of brief and passionate appeal to intellect and emotion.

You now have something to work on, an example



of a speech plan which you can develop or alter as you please. Next time, choose a subject of your own and work through the stages of preparation with it.

At length you come to the last stage of your work. The plan is often likened to a skeleton, and we can say that the addition to it of the material is the covering of the skeleton with sinews and muscles and, since the result must be pleasing, with flesh and proportion. The last work before you is to clothe the skeleton. You must do this so well that the skeleton is invisible. A professional anatomist meeting you in the street might be able to detect any slight fault in your anatomical construction. A professional speaker may be able to detect the plan of your speech not long after your Introduction. But no one else should be able to do that. Otherwise interest would begin to dwindle.

At the same time, your plan must not be so hidden that your speech is a shapeless mass. You must aim at a result between the two dangers of a partly visible skeleton and a fat, sagging shape of which the audience can make little use. In other words, don't use too much material and don't use too little. Don't use too many words, nor too few. Material is muscle and flesh, words are the clothing.

How do you feel about speech-making now? It should be much clearer to you, but you are certainly feeling puzzled about certain aspects of it. For instance, it will not be surprising if, in gathering material and planning for your practice speeches, you have felt that while the ideas were good, you

don't quite know how to "get them across". How to be persuasive, that is. You are in the same position as a writer who has, he is sure, a grand story to tell, but finds that, as soon as his typewriter starts clicking, something seems to have come between him and the things which are clear in his mind. His sentences come out with jerky stiffness, his style is stilted, the beautiful things he wanted to write look different when he sees them on paper. Well, it is only a question of not knowing his craft. He will learn in time how to write. You, too, must realise that, although you now know a good deal about speech preparation, much of the orator's art is still unknown to you.

You will see this at once if you recall that the aim of the art is persuasion. What do you know about that? Unless you know a good deal about it, you cannot succeed as a speaker. That is why we are going to consider the means of persuasion before we deal in detail with how to open and close a speech. In the list of contents at the beginning of this book, the intrusion of two chapters on persuasiveness right in the middle of chapters on how to write speeches must look odd. However it looks, learning about persuasiveness now is going to save you from a good deal of discouragement in your study. The next two chapters are going to give you what is, to most people, a surprising insight into the craft and skill which are hidden within the speaker's art.



## CHAPTER VI

### HOW TO PERSUADE (I)

OCCASIONALLY we read in our newspapers and news magazines of the discovery of a drug like penicillin or the sulphonamide group. When the history of the discovery is later made known, we usually find that it has taken a long time to bring the drug into use for human beings. As a rule, the discoverer has first found that his chemicals will kill certain bacteria under certain conditions—*e.g.*, in one group of animals. He then has to begin a long course of research to find out how the reaction can safely be tried in man. It is usually the case that the main problem in introducing to the world a great medical discovery is how to put the chemicals into the human system without destructive or even fatal results. Sometimes it is a question of altering the actions of the chemical to some extent; at other times the problem is simply one of how to get the chemical to the part of the body which needs it without upsetting the rest of the body.

Much the same state of affairs is to be found in dealing with the mind. A psychiatrist may realise that a certain idea is harming his patient's mind. He has either to get it out or to reach into the mind and alter it slightly, so that it is in harmony with the other activities of the mind. He needs a perfect

knowledge of psychology to be able to do this without harming or unbalancing other ideas in that mind.

In any attempt at persuasiveness, the speaker is in the same position, at least to some extent. Before him are many minds, each of them individual in outlook and accustomed to its own habits of thought. How are you going to persuade those minds to accept the ideas and suggestions you wish to put into them?

This statement of your problem will help you to see why speech preparation must go far beyond any rule of thumb about the divisions of a speech, its proportions and construction. For the speaker needs to know not only how to make a speech, but how to use it. Perhaps you are an expert at making a rifle. You will not be a soldier until you know also how to use it. You may be able to fashion a speech which will look well on paper. But you will never be a speaker until you can prepare a speech with persuasiveness in your mind as much as anything else.

So far in this book we have been thinking principally about your own qualifications and the method of planning a speech. It is now time to look long and earnestly at the audience, because we now have to fit into our study the means of making this address a living thing which will be active among it. We have to shape it so that it will work, amongst the ideas in the minds we are trying to influence, like a chemical works in the body or the psychologist's suggestions work in the mind.

Your awareness of the working of your own mind tells you, as has already been suggested, that you do



not always act under the compulsion of reason. Many things we think, do and say are really unreasonable. We act under the impulse of emotion. That is why we say things which we know will provoke a quarrel and hurt us as much as they hurt anyone else. It is, less obviously, why children often have to be coaxed into doing things they intend to do in any case. Some instinct or emotion holds them back from action so that they may be coaxed. Sometimes it is an unperceived sense of their own importance, and sometimes the opposite—a desire for self-assertion. Your audience, although adult, is almost as much subject to the influence of instinct and emotion as are children.

Indeed, even individuals have often to be dealt with more through a knowledge of their psychological make-up than through plain reason. Most people who have, as they thought, wooed in vain have learned that lesson. And you may know it from many experiences. Perhaps you are one of those people who has had to persuade a relation or friend to undergo an operation. You soon realised that it was no use attempting to force the patient's will, and you had recourse to various appeals. "You are going to be a coward if you give way to fears like this. No, I don't think you're a coward, but you're going to become one. If you continue to refuse this operation you will never be able to work again. Who will provide for your family? If you die, all you have worked for and built up will be in the possession and control of others. Are you sure everything will be as you wish?"

If you remain an invalid, your plans and your life's work will never be accomplished."

In various ways like that you tried to influence the patient. You were both agreed, intellectually, that an operation was advisable. But you had to work on the mind in order to rouse an instinct or emotion which would be strong enough to overcome what was preventing the will from doing what reason demanded. In your own way, you were an excellent psychologist.

And a psychologist you must be if you are to persuade people. Every salesman, every insurance agent, will tell you that. Nor is it a formidable task to equip yourself to deal psychologically with an audience. You do not need to study the ways of the mind deeply, which is a lifetime's study, nor to fathom the obscure processes by which our minds and wills are moved. Fortunately, speakers have long since noted the principal motives by which people are persuaded, and all you need to do is to examine their conclusions and understand them. Then you can use them. Notice what the great orator, Edmund Burke, said of the power of words to move an audience:—

"Now, as words affect, not by any original power, but by representation, it might be supposed that their influence over the passions would be light; yet it is quite otherwise, for we find by experience that eloquence and poetry are as capable, nay, indeed much more capable, of making deep and lively impressions than



any other arts, and even than nature itself in very many cases.”

This he explains by a truth which you will do well always to remember, that your words may have less influence over your audience than you exert by your presence. He continues:—

“If a person speaks upon any subject, he can not only convey the subject to you, but likewise the manner in which he is himself affected by it.”

As we have already seen, the orator reminds us that you must give the audience yourself just as much as your message, if you are to succeed in rousing it to thought or action according to your purpose. You must give it some of your own zeal, conviction and energy.

With these ideas we turn to the audience, to discover those means of persuasiveness which are partly an appeal to the instincts and emotions and partly a gift to it of those which animate you while speaking. For these are the foundations on which your success must be well laid.

*Motive 1. Self-Preservation.* At the outset we must face the fact that some of these motives for human action may sound selfish and we may be disturbed by the thought that any appeal to them is unworthy. The first motive is liable to be suspected in this way.

To convince ourselves that the impression is false, remember that we have already decided that

any unworthy appeal will find no place in our public addresses. Furthermore, we are now dealing with the primitive, most intimate human instincts and emotions. These were given to us for our preservation and advancement. We are made so that we can fear the things which may hurt us (to keep us from them) and to be angry with them when we have to meet them (to enable us to fight them). We are made to love the things which will do us good and to hope for them, so that we may not merely long for them, but work to obtain them. Obviously, we can use these instincts in a selfish way; we all of us do so to some extent, and some people give themselves over to selfishness. But in themselves they are good, and produce good if properly used.

Therefore it is not only justifiable but necessary for the speaker to rely on their aid in the achievement of his honest purposes. We can quickly see this if we take an example of an appeal to a completely selfish motive. When the policeman visits a school to talk to little children about road sense and safety, he urges them to look right and left before stepping off the pavement. He does not say, "If you do not, some motorist will get a bad fright, and perhaps he may hurt you and have to be very unhappy before people realise that it was your fault and not his." Nor does he say, "If you are knocked down by a bus in the street on your way home after school, your mother will be very unhappy."

Instead of these remarks, his first appeal, and his most urgent appeal, is, "If you are knocked down,



you will be killed. Or one of your legs may be broken and you will be in hospital for weeks in bed." He wisely makes a wholly selfish appeal to the instinct of self-preservation. Nor can we say that the children are selfish, in a bad sense of the word, when they obey their instructor's advice in order that they may remain uninjured.

None of these appeals can be said to be selfish or unworthy of the speaker's use, since they do not ask for an unchecked indulgence of selfish instinct or emotion.

What more powerful appeal could you make for action to prevent war than to self-preservation? And what could be a fairer appeal? It is equally just and honest when invoked in matters of less importance and affecting comparatively small groups of people.

| "Self-love, my liege, is not so vile a sin,  
| As self-neglecting."

(*Henry V*, Act II.)

Here is a useful quotation which you may occasionally work into your appeal under this heading.

*Motive 2. Possessions.* Although at first sight this motive of human conduct might appear almost identical with the motive of Self-Preservation, it is quite different from it, and embraces a wide range of personal welfare. It concentrates on possessions alone, and aims at moving an audience by a demonstration that a certain opinion or, more probably, a certain course of action will result in increased gain or loss. This is obviously a favourite appeal in business speeches. It is used, too, in many

debates in the conduct of public affairs—*e.g.*, a Council might well alter its opinion about pulling down old buildings if it could be shown that they might be used to attract tourists, who like to see the shops and homes of bygone centuries. Many seaside resorts have their policies decided by reference to this motive of Possessions. Should money be spent on a new bathing-pool or not? This appeal will win the argument for whichever side can deal with it most convincingly. In private life, many a man has refused to increase his insurance cover until it was pointed out to him that his dependents would benefit by the terms of the new proposal.

We should notice, too, that this motive moves us in matters far removed from material considerations. We have immaterial, spiritual goods and possessions. The motive of Possessions can easily be used by the speaker who wishes to impress his audience with some spiritual aim. For example, he might be urging the building of a new wing at a university, or helping to organise groups for adult education. He can convincingly make the point that, if we concentrate our efforts on material prosperity alone, we harm ourselves.

“ Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.”

(Goldsmith: *The Deserted Village*.)

Here he is attacking the accumulation of material possessions, but the motive to which he appeals is undoubtedly that of Possession.

And in considering this motive, we should also note that with it, as with all the other motives, you can



use many of the headings considered in the preceding chapter. For instance, you can distinguish the qualities of possessions." . . . For what shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? " The words recorded by St. Mark provide a good example of the use of Contrast between material and spiritual possessions. This is an aspect of these appeals which is worth careful study.

Take this appeal to Possessions, and see how many kinds of appeals you can make, all based upon it, by varying it through the headings of the preceding chapter. You can make appeals framed on the causes of Possessions, effects, anecdotes, fallacies and so on related to this one theme. You readily see how you have at your command many kinds of appeal, and not just the nine which you are at present reading about in two chapters.

To put your appeal under the form indicated by any of the categories we considered in the chapter on Immediate Speech Preparation is an interesting experience. Sometimes you find you have formed a new kind of appeal; usually you find that you have given one of the original forms a refreshingly new aspect which will impress your audience by its very novelty.

Keep this method in mind throughout this chapter and the later use you will make of it.

*Motive 3.* Next we must think of the third motive which is an ever-present trait in human character—Desire for Power. Notice again how easy it is to imagine this to be an evil characteristic of man.

Yet the man who joins a welfare committee does so in order that he may have some power to help the downcast in life. It is not power, but the good exercise of the power within him that is his aim. In appealing to every man's wish to exercise influence, you are not directing your influence towards anything ignoble in your audience.

Most men and women enjoy the experience of listening to the pros and cons of a discussion and afterwards of expressing their view by a vote, a decision or an action. It is the natural exercise of their free wills and intelligence; that is why it is pleasing to them. This thoughtfulness and subsequent activity of the will is the target at which your speech aims. You seek to convince and then move your audience. It is another way of stating this third motive. You try to make your listeners enjoy deciding what you wish them to decide and to find satisfaction in acting as you have planned they shall act.

A slightly different approach in the use of this motive is to work on the natural feeling of pleasure we all have in the thought that something depends on us. This view of the motive seems to me to be one which could be used more often than it is. We like to know and be assured that, slight though our personal influence may be, it is a real influence, and that whatever we decide certainly has an effect, for good or ill, beyond our immediate circle.

“How far that little candle throws his beams!  
So shines a good deed in a naughty world.”

*(Merchant of Venice, Act V.)*



Ladies may notice that this form of appeal is particularly suited to them. It is natural to them, and is usually well received from them.

Appeal to the satisfaction which the pursuit of a certain course of action will give to those you are addressing. Dwell on the peace of mind it will bring them. State the reasons for the happiness they will experience after their vote or act has launched a power for good on its way into life. What you may be seeking is a decision which will benefit shareholders, a permission which may bring happiness to a group of people, support for a political movement. The object of your address, whatever it may be, will usually be suitable for the exercise of this kind of appeal. Think it over and, when you use it, bring as much variety into it as you can.

*Motive 4.* The last motive we are to consider in this chapter we may sum up under the title of Good Name. To stimulate an audience by it, you suggest that credit will attach to those who accept your proposals, a credit of which they may be rightly proud. Here again you are not asking people to become conceited, but to take legitimate satisfaction in the result of their own decisions. It is the innocent self-satisfaction which follows prudent thought, a wise resolution, a sound business deal, a generous act. If it is used too bluntly or too obviously it ceases to be an appeal to reputation or good name and becomes flattery. This is not an appeal at all. Moreover, it is unbecoming, insincere and, from the strictly practical point of view, quite useless.

To take an example, a perfect example, of this appeal properly used, we can turn to Henry V's speech to his soldiers before the battle of Agincourt. Remember that the English troops were outnumbered and in danger of losing heart. The king might have rallied them by a speech full of scorn for the man who would turn his face from his enemies. Instead of that, he expresses his understanding of what might look to others like cowardice, and he rouses their determination to see the day through, whatever its result to each man personally, by pointing out to them that they had opportunity, which life would never bring again, of gaining the honour and credit of true manhood.

You will notice that he emphasises the risks of the impending battle, instead of minimising them, so that he can throw into greater relief the credit which a struggle against odds may bring. You will find the same line of thought in the mind of Horatio, as Macaulay sets him to guard the bridge in the celebrated *Lay*. The main points of the speech are, first, the king's sense of honour in the face of danger; secondly, his understanding of those who do not share his exalted emotion; thirdly, appeal to his men's pride in their martial reputation. This leads to the conclusion, which is all that a conclusion should be in brevity and passion.

“ . . . No, my fair cousin :

If we are markt to die, we are enow

To do our country loss ; and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honour.

God's will ! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

By Jove, I am not covetous for gold ;



Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;  
 It yearns me not if men my garments wear;  
 Such outward things dwell not in my desires:  
 But if it be a sin to covet honour,  
 I am the most offending soul alive.  
 No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:  
 God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour,  
 As one man more, methinks, would share from me,  
 For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!"

So far the king has not appeared to work upon his audience at all. By skilful suggestion, he has placed his main idea in his soldiers' minds where he will soon work upon it. Before doing so, he soothes any alarm which his apparent self-communing may have raised by removing the stigma of cowardice from any man who will not respond to the appeal he knows he is about to make. This is a useful point to notice in using the appeal to the motive of reputation. The speech teaches you not to offend those who later refuse to fall in with your proposal.

"Rather proclaim it, Westmorland, through my host,  
 That he which hath no stomach for this fight,  
 Let him depart; his passport shall be made,  
 And crowns for convoy put into his purse:  
 We would not die in that man's company  
 That fears his fellowship to die with us."

Yes, there's a sting in it. But in the main these remarks are soothing. Yet they have a deeper purpose, and that is why the sting is in the tail. The king knows, as we all do, that one way to stiffen our backs is to make retreat easy for us. The mere knowledge that, by public proclamation, our retreat has been facilitated will keep us at our places in the ranks. The more closely you look into this speech

Cheng - Po - Chum, Chinese Communication

the better you realise its perfection. The king calms the fears of the man who wishes to withdraw; at the same time, he makes him feel ashamed of the act of withdrawal and, in a quick movement, makes known his own low estimate of the man who is not a coward but certainly is not a man. So he sets the stage for his appeal . . . stay with me, and be men, in life or in death!

“ This day is call'd the feast of Crispian :  
 He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,  
 Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named,  
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian.  
 He that shall live this day, and see old age,  
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,  
 And say, ' Tomorrow is St. Crispian : '  
 Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,  
 And say, ' These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'  
 Old men forget : yet all shall be forgot,  
 But he'll remember with advantages  
 What feats he did that day. . . . ”

The king tells the soldiers that their names shall live with his own and those of his knights. He continues,

“ This story shall the good man teach his son ;  
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,  
 From this day to the ending of the world,  
 But we in it shall be remembered,—— ”

This we may take as the summary of his speech. It is followed by the Conclusion :—

“ We few, we happy few, we band of brothers ;  
 For he to-day that sheds his blood with me  
 Shall be my brother ; be he ne'er so vile,  
 This day shall gentle his condition :



And gentlemen in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurst they were not here;  
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks  
That fought with us upon St. Crispin's day."

There is the perfect example of the Appeal to Good Name.

## CHAPTER VII

### HOW TO PERSUADE (II)

FIVE more psychological instruments for use in influencing an audience remain to be considered. We must remind ourselves that when you turn to their use, the audience is at the point where it must be swung over to your view or lost. You have made your appeal to the intellect. Your arguments are at this moment being pondered. Here and now you must throw in these appeals to instinct, moral responsibility and emotion, like the last charge which wins the day.

*Motive 5.* First, then, think about the direct appeal to Emotion. It is an appeal to sentiment, but not to sentimentality. You should be careful to retain a certain nobility, both of thought and of language, in your remarks, since this in itself is sufficient to prevent your lapsing from true sentiment to the mawkish appeal which is based on perverted emotion—e.g., self-pity instead of pity. Ladies especially should be careful in dealing directly with the emotions, since they are inclined to betray their own emotion, which usually displeases an audience and tends towards sentimentality. If properly used, this direct address to the emotion can be, for ladies as well as for men, a most powerful incentive for moving your audience



along towards the goal which is the purpose of your speech.

“Thought is deeper than all speech;  
Feeling deeper than all thought . . .”

(C. P. Cranch.)

To these feelings of honour, credit, solid possession, charity and justice you turn all the power that is in you, and the mood of your audience comes out to you.

“Great thoughts, great feelings came to them  
Like instincts, unawares.”

(R. Monckton Milnes.)

You continue to work on your ‘listeners’ respect for their fellows, on their sense of social obligation, on their instinct for what is morally right or uplifting, on their sense of proportion and fitness. Presently you begin to feel the response which welcomes your efforts. The atmosphere, friendly though it may have been before, is changing. There is a tenseness previously absent, the silence of people moved and afraid lest their emotion should betray them. There is that indefinable something described by Samuel Rogers:—

“The soul of music slumbers in the shell,  
Till waked and kindled by the master’s spell;  
And feeling hearts, touch them but rightly, pour  
A thousand melodies unheard before!”

You may lawfully work upon the prejudices and dislikes of your audience, always provided that these are honourable. It is a wise thing to make your objective in appealing to emotion nothing

less than Sir Walter Scott had in mind when he wrote:—

“Some feelings are to mortals given,  
With less of earth in them than heaven.”

These are the objects of your search when you strive to rouse the emotions of an audience.

*Motive 6.* Much less dramatic is the Appeal to Convention. If we were to judge it by its title, we might think this appeal scarcely worth a note of a few lines' length. But its content is not quite as obvious as the name suggests. It does not indicate only your pointing out that the proposal you make is in accordance with accepted conventions. Rather it is a means of quietening the fears of listeners who, although wishing to accept your ideas, find them too novel or startling. If you saw a strange fruit on the dinner-table you might cautiously decide not to taste it. When your host tells you what it is and that it is the staple diet of people in another part of the world, your worst fears are set at rest, and you require little persuasion to sample the novelty.

In exactly the same way, you may occasionally find it useful to be able to tell an audience that, although your proposal may be new, its idea is taken for granted elsewhere, and that its practice is so usual that doubt about it would be regarded as imprudent. There is a small but important point to notice in this. It is that while you could not expect an audience to accept your suggestion simply because it is accepted elsewhere, you could form a solid basis for your appeal by showing that its content is elsewhere the accepted practice. In



this there is a definite assurance to which your audience can cling while it again thinks over what has been put before it.

As you will notice, this form of appeal is a kind of following-up speech. It would rarely be the only form of appeal, and still more rarely would it be a compelling motive by which your listeners would proceed in your direction.

*Motive 7.* A more subtle form of appeal, and one of great power when skilfully used, is the Appeal by Contrary Suggestion. We must think about it carefully, placing ourselves more in the auditorium than on the platform. We must think of it rather as if it were being used upon us than as if we were using it on someone else. It is principally founded on that curious but definite characteristic of human nature which leads us to desire the thing which is refused us. We all want to know a secret, just as certainly as, once knowing it, we feel the longing to tell it to someone. In the same way, we all wanted sweet things as soon as they were rationed. The best way to spread anything is to limit its circulation. As a rule, many people will then apply for it who would not have shown any interest if it had been unlimited in supply. The instinct of acquisitiveness which is largely behind this trait of character is always found in an audience.

There are two ways of making this appeal. The first is to show the idea you are opposing in a good light. In a sense, it is a process of "damning with faint praise", for your intention is, of course, to show your own idea in a better light. In the end,

the audience will relinquish the first idea with regret, saying to itself that it is a pity to have to give up something so attractive, but unfortunately not quite so attractive as the idea you have been trying to establish. The method is often useful if an audience is suspected of being slightly hostile to the purpose of your speech.

By way of example, we may imagine that you are trying to persuade a committee to form a football team instead of a cricket team. You might begin, in your preparation, by making a list of the comparative advantages of both cricket and football. It would soon be apparent that cricket is played in a season when many games are possible out of doors, and that football has few rivals. Here is a useful point. In planning your speech, therefore, you make the adoption of football instead of cricket your Particular Purpose, and the Means for promoting it is the idea that football is more necessary for club members than cricket, because it provides for them in a season when they would be at a loose end without it. In your address you enumerate the benefits of cricket, carefully comparing each with the advantages provided by other summer games. You make this comparison almost casually, for you are suggesting a point, not making it directly. Then you pass on to praise the benefits of football, adding extra praise at each step because no other sport is available in the winter. Here you are making a point you have not openly stated. You are creating a frame of mind. While the audience is weighing up the comparative merits of



cricket and football, you are forming in its thoughts the idea that football has one advantage which you have not mentioned—its greater usefulness because it is played during the indoor season. As to whether you will finally make this point explicitly depends on your judgment of the audience. To do so might be necessary, or you may sense that it would spoil the effect you have already achieved.

Now turn to the other method of the Appeal by Contrary Suggestion. This is to suggest an idea and then withdraw it, as if you no longer wished to express it. Immediately your audience wants to know what it is. Curiosity is aroused, interest is maintained by your refusal to bring forward the idea again, although you do allow it to be mentioned, perhaps rather more fully than before. Usually you will bring this method into play late in your speech, but sometimes it is a good thing to introduce it at an early stage.

To understand it fully, and to be able to examine it at leisure, it is necessary to read a speech in which it is prominent. That would require some pages of print were we not fortunate in having a splendid example of it in Mark Antony's speech to the Roman mob after the death of Cæsar. The orator's purpose was to turn the wrath of the crowd against Brutus and his fellow-murderers. He believed that the people, always pampered by the free circus tickets and free distributions of food by which the Emperors held their allegiance, would resent Cæsar's death if they were told that Cæsar had made them his heirs. Yet he was not sure that a

sudden revelation of this fact would further his purpose in speaking. He must be more subtle. He must appear as a friend of the popular Brutus, praise Brutus and, by Contrary Suggestion, insinuate into his hearers' minds the suspicion that Brutus is not so admirable. In fact, he is to suggest, perhaps Cæsar was more to be admired than despised.

You will notice, by the way, that Mark Antony makes use of a rather low form of the Appeal to the instinct of Possession, already considered. However, his main appeal is through Contrary Suggestion, and Cæsar's Will is the means he intends to use. Notice how he gradually suggests that Cæsar is to be admired, and that the approved act of Brutus is less admirable than had been supposed. Then comes the apparently accidental revelation of the Will, Mark Antony's refusal to read it, and finally the demand of the mob that it shall be read. There are two separate uses of this Appeal.

“ . . . the noble Brutus  
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious;  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault;  
And grievously hath Cæsar answer'd it.  
Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest,—  
For Brutus is an honourable man;  
So are they all, all honourable men,—  
Come I to speak in Cæsar's funeral.  
He was my friend, faithful and just to me:  
But Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honourable man.  
He hath brought many captives home to Rome,  
Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:  
Did this in Cæsar seem ambitious?  
When that the poor have cried, Cæsar hath wept:  
Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And Brutus is an honourable man.



You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?  
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;  
And, sure, he is an honourable man."

So the Contrary Suggestion goes on, almost imperceptibly changing to an open charge against Brutus. Before it is necessary to make an accusation of murder against the conspirators, the crowd is murmuring:—

"If thou think rightly of the matter,  
Cæsar has had great wrong."

And the reply of another citizen threatens Brutus, although still guardedly.

"If it be found so, some will dear abide it."

This is the time to produce the Will and employ Contrary Suggestion in another way.

"O masters, if I were disposed to stir  
Your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage,  
I should do Brutus wrong, and Cassius wrong,  
Who, you all know, are honourable men:  
I will not do them wrong; I rather choose  
To wrong the dead, to wrong myself, and you,  
Than I will wrong such honourable men.  
But here's a parchment with the seal of Cæsar,—  
I found it in his closet,—'tis his will:  
Let but the commons hear this testament,—  
Which, pardon me, I do not mean to read,—  
And they would go and kiss dead Cæsar's wounds,  
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood;  
Yes, beg a hair of him for memory. . . ."

And the result is the first cry of a citizen for the reading of the Will, supported by immediate acclamation. But Mark Antony replies,

"Have patience, gentle friends, I must not read it;  
It is not meet you know how Cæsar loved you.  
You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;  
And, being men, hearing the will of Cæsar,  
It will inflame you, it will make you mad:  
'Tis good you know not that you are his heirs;  
For, if you should, O, what would come of it!

*Fourth Citizen.*

Read the will: we'll hear it, Antony;  
You shall read us the will,—Cæsar's will.

*Mark Antony.*

Will you be patient? will you stay awhile?  
I have o'ershot myself to tell you of it:  
I fear I wrong the honourable men  
Whose daggers have stabb'd Cæsar; I do fear it.

*Fourth Citizen.*

They were traitors: honourable men!

*Citizens.*

The will! the testament!

*Second Citizen.*

They were villains, murderers: the will! read the will!

*Mark Antony.*

You will compel me, then, to read the will?  
Then make a ring about the corpse of Cæsar,  
And let me show you him that made the will.  
Shall I descend? And will you give me leave?"

Long before that last cry for the reading of the Will, Antony knew that his rhetorical device had succeeded. How he enjoyed the cynical request that he might have leave to step down to read the Will! That is how this motive is approached by a master of oratory.

*Motive 8.* Finally we come to the Appeal by Indirect Suggestion. This method is not really an appeal to an emotion or instinct, but is certainly a



method of introducing an idea and developing it in the minds of the audience. Moreover, it is not the same as the Appeal by Contrary Suggestion. It is a means by which you can take the edge off expected opposition or go round any unwillingness to hear your proposals. In other words, it is an appeal to interest which usually needs to be followed quickly by one of the other methods we have been studying. It is also a method of introducing ideas which may arouse some objection, although the audience is not predisposed against them.

You introduce your idea by saying, "Doubtless you know that many people believe that . . . ." You are not at the moment proposing that anyone listening to you should adopt the idea, but by bringing it forward almost as an aside or a casual reference, you have succeeded in drawing attention to it. You are now able to talk about the idea without anyone taking alarm. "Suppose we were to look at this idea from our own point of view," brings the idea nearer to the audience. By now it will have commended itself to some of your listeners. "If we think the suggestion over quietly and without preconceived ideas, we can understand why it has commended itself to others." There is a third phrase which puts the proposal where you want it to be. People are now thinking about it without feeling they are being committed to acceptance. Some of the displeasure they might have felt because of the subject's novelty or unfamiliarity has worn off by the time you put it forward for their serious consideration.

You now have eight motives and methods by which you can reach your audience and influence instinct and emotion. They are the chief weapons in your armoury. However, you must not imagine that you are now fully equipped to sway an audience as Mark Antony shaped the emotions of the Romans to his purpose. When you have read the next chapter, you will be able to re-read that orator's speech with deeper understanding of his skill. Mark Antony did not say, "You know that Cæsar refused a crown, thrice offered him". He said,

" You all did see that on the Lupercal  
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,  
Which he did thrice refuse . . ."

He gave his audience something to see rather than something to know. He gave them something concrete, something apprehended by the senses of sight and hearing. Mark Antony not only knew what kind of appeal to make to his audience but also how to make it. The right words and the right forms of expression were at his command. They will soon be at your command, too.

These principles in the art of persuasion would be incomplete if we were to omit the invaluable appeal to Unity. It is not really an appeal, in the sense of the above outlined appeals to motives of human conduct, but it certainly is a means of entering the minds of your listeners and allaying there any uneasiness which knowledge of your subject may have caused. As a rule, you will find it best to appeal for Unity early in your address, if



not at the beginning. Occasionally, however, the appeal is more successful if withheld until a late stage of the speech. You alone can judge its timing, according to immediate circumstances.

This appeal is the establishment of a platform on which both you and your audience may stand. Perhaps your listeners are strongly opposed to your ideas, or perhaps what you have to say may be known to oppose some half-forgotten dislike which you must not revive. Incidentally, in such circumstances never browbeat an audience. Your task is to persuade, never to impose your will. It is your duty to find something which you share with these people who are listening to you in spite of their dislike of your ideas.

In every debatable subject there is a meeting-ground of neutrality on which the opposing parties can stand. Suppose, for example, that you were to speak in support of Vaccination to a group of people whose sympathies, if not their convictions, were with the view that the precaution is harmful instead of preventive. What have you in common with them? It is immediately evident that you share with them an interest in the preservation of good health. There is something for you to consider as a means of keeping in unity with your audience. Further thought shows you that, while this makes a satisfactory means of gaining unity with your audience, it might unless it is skilfully handled emphasise that there are differences between you. Thus you might, rather carelessly, so stress the common interest as to make it a background to differ-

ences, giving the impression that you are nervous of your listeners and unwilling to face them.

A little more thought and you see that the real unity between yourself and your audience is made of your interest to prevent certain infectious diseases. The method of prevention is the source of differences, and the necessity for prevention is the link across those differences. If you focus attention on prevention, therefore, you face the opposition squarely and at the same time hold your audience close to you. You might open your address in this way:—

“Not long ago everyone expected to catch small-pox at least once in his lifetime. It was a national scourge and few escaped all the frequent epidemics which fell upon the country. Its threat to health was much reduced by the introduction of modern methods of sanitation, but the disease is so contagious that we are still liable to the beginning of epidemics in our ports and cities. We are familiar with the effects of several forms of this disease, the scarring and pitting of the skin, weakening of sight, serious and prolonged prostration, and the general after-effects of a severely febrile ailment.

“In fact, we are all agreed that it is of the first importance that we should take every action, individually or as a community, which may prevent the occurrence and spread of small-pox. Whatever views each of us may hold about the suitability of particular means of attaining this end, we are undoubtedly one in



our anxiety to keep this scourge under complete control.”

On this platform of unity both speaker and audience may stand. It gives your listeners a few minutes in which to take note of you, to make acquaintance with you and, as you deliver your opening sentences quietly and pleasantly, to like you. From your point of view, you have gained initial agreement. You have taken the edge off the opposition, and can now go forward to persuade that audience that, at least, you are a fair and honest speaker. You are moving towards an objective which, with any other approach, would certainly be unattainable.

A long road still lies before you if your Particular Purpose is to be reached successfully, but even supposing that this conciliatory speech does not draw many listeners over to the opinion you are advocating, it will certainly win a limited support, and may well make complete victory possible on some other occasion. A partial victory is sometimes all we can hope to gain in one speech, although there are occasions when we are able to persuade an audience completely from its original ideas to our own. Only the speaker can decide whether he is to aim at winning part of the road and holding it, or to aim at reaching its end as soon as possible. So long as he knows the right methods of speaking, he need have little anxiety except as to whether his judgment of the degrees of success to aim at is sound.

## CHAPTER VIII

### “SEEN AS WELL AS HEARD”

IF it is possible to dispute the saying that children should be seen and not heard, even the most argumentative people cannot debate the truth that public speakers should be seen as well as heard. That is to say, their message should be visible as well as audible. You have now spent some time carefully studying ways and means by which you can persuade your listeners to accept the Particular Purpose of your addresses. And you have probably realised, after practising the suggestions made in the two preceding chapters, that you must pay careful attention to the presentation of those methods. The manner in which your appeal is made and the style of your address have an important effect on your success. To take a parallel example, you may know how to provide goods of real value in a certain line of manufacture, but unless you can make them externally attractive, there will be little hope of sales.

It is unfortunately often true that the salesman with a line of goods which attract the eye secures the customers before the vendor of superior articles of less finished appearance. You have considered the right methods by which to present the motives which will stir your audience; now you



must think about the manner in which those methods are to be presented. Certain principles, all more or less equally important, are offered for your guidance.

1. *Prefer the Concrete to the Abstract.* In ordinary conversation some people have a natural gift for concrete expression, and it is to be noticed that they are often not the more highly educated among our acquaintances. What we may call very ordinary and almost vulgar expressions are usually concrete, because when people need clear speech who have not, through education, facility in expression, nature itself guides them away from the vague and abstract. I shall always remember, for instance, an old woman complaining to me many years ago about the ingratitude of her son, for whom she had made great sacrifices. Instead of saying, “Children often forget their parents”, or something equally general, she said, “You nivver see kitten bring owt to cat”.

The phrase gives you the clue to concrete expression. That phrase is concrete which refers to something having actual physical existence. “He interfered with my progress” is an abstract phrase; but the meaning is concretely expressed by, “He put a spoke in my wheel”. And because you refer to things which can be apprehended by our senses, people more quickly understand what you mean. Moreover, they more easily remember what you have said. It is interesting to practise concrete expression while you read. You can translate the abstract terms of speeches, reported in your newspaper, into

the concrete. Perhaps you have noticed that advice is usually given vaguely—*e.g.*, the general terms of advice from the Bench in reports of local Court proceedings. Train yourself by noting every passage you read which strikes you by the number of abstract terms and improve it by substituting appropriate concrete words and phrases.✓

If you are doubtful as to whether a passage is capable of improvement in this way, there is one test by which you can assure yourself on the point. If a sentence contains many nouns which can be avoided, that phrase is too abstract. It may have other faults, but this is certainly one of them. Many nouns make a sentence both cumbrous and vague.

In this rather enjoyable exercise three points will help you.

(i) Prefer the concrete word to the abstract. This is a simple piece of advice, but beginners at least can be at a loss to know how to deal with a sentence, because they think in terms of expression rather than of word. Always remember, the thing with material existence is concrete. For example, the *fire* of love is a better phrase than the *ardour* of love.

(ii) Translate the unfamiliar into the familiar. Of course, you cannot be sure exactly what is familiar to your listeners, but you usually have an accurate idea of what is familiar enough to be useful to you in carrying out this advice. It would be a mistake to say that St. Paul's Cathedral is 365 feet in height and to leave the information thus un-



adorned. You may say that the exact measurement of a building is concrete enough, but remember that the more senses you can give to your information the more successful you will be in imparting it. Therefore tell the audience that this measurement means that the cathedral is so many times higher than the building in which you are speaking, or so many times higher than the local Cenotaph or Town Hall. That is a more understandable and concrete measurement for them, since it tells them how high 365 feet is. This principle is of particular help to you if your speech contains many figures, whether they be of measurement, addition or anything else.

(iii) Express the unexperienced in terms of the experienced. This is not the same as the point just considered, for we are now dealing with things which, although perhaps experienced in some way, are definitely not within the experience of our senses. You will see the difference if you try to tell people the temperature of the sun. The amazing figure in degrees Centigrade will mean very little to them, and they will quickly forget it. But they will retain a reasonably exact idea if you tell them that this figure represents a heat so many times greater than that of red-hot iron. Tell them what you wish in exact terms, of course, but always repeat the information in terms their senses can help them to grasp. It is more difficult to convey what has not been experienced by sense than what is merely unfamiliar. Take great care, then, to give your listeners every help.

2. *Use Sustained Concrete Expression.* This is a safeguard against the danger of the occasionally remarkable and concrete phrase and a reminder that, wherever possible, not merely phrases or sentences, but whole passages of your address should be definite and detailed. As an example, contrast the two passages following. One gives the sense of the meaning to be conveyed, and the other is the opening of the ninth chapter of Macaulay's *History of England*.

“After the acquittal of the Bishops, who had been charged with libel, the interested parties sent a formal invitation, in June, 1688, petitioning William, Prince of Orange, to ascend the throne.”

“The acquittal of the Bishops was not the only event which makes the thirtieth of June, 1688, a great epoch in history. On that day, while the bells of a hundred churches were ringing, while multitudes were busied, from Hyde Park to Mile End Road, in piling faggots and dressing Popes for the rejoicings of the night, was despatched from London to the Hague an instrument scarcely less important to the liberties of England than the Great Charter.”

Whatever Macaulay's faults as a historian may have been, or whatever may be said for or against his prose style, he cannot be accused of vagueness. His style is based on the concrete. Look at another example of it, taken at random, from the first chapter of the *History*.



“The battle of Hastings, and the events which followed it, not only placed a Duke of Normandy on the English throne, but gave up the whole population of England to the tyranny of the Norman race. The subjugation of a nation by a nation has seldom, even in Asia, been more complete. The country was portioned out among the captains of the invaders. Strong military institutions, closely connected with the institution of property, enabled the foreign conquerors to oppress the children of the soil. A cruel penal code, cruelly enforced, guarded the privileges, and even the sports, of the alien tyrants. Yet the subject race, though beaten down and trodden underfoot, still made its sting felt. Some bold men, the favourite heroes of our oldest ballads, betook themselves to the woods, and there, in defiance of curfew laws and forest laws, waged a predatory war against their oppressors. Assassination was an event of daily occurrence. Many Normans suddenly disappeared, leaving no trace. The corpses of many were found bearing the marks of violence. Death by torture was denounced against the murderers, and strict search made for them, but generally in vain; for the whole nation was in a conspiracy to screen them.”

Of course, it is not always possible or proper to be concrete in expression. Certain subjects or passages are better expressed in abstract terms,

especially if they are meditative or reflective. The good speaker will not aim at a complete avoidance of abstract phrasing, but will use both the abstract and the concrete, as his subject requires.

3. *Be Visual in Expression.* One of the handicaps which the radio playwright has to overcome is the absence of scenery or any aid to the eye. A speaker is even more severely handicapped, for he cannot resort to the "effects" which aid a radio play. He approaches his audience by hearing alone. It is most important that he should appeal to as many senses as possible through this one sense which is wholly devoted to him. If you can see a thing as well as hear it, you both understand and remember it more easily than if it is invisible. We know that from personal experience, dating from the days of our illustrated text-books in school. You must help your audience, by every means in your power, to see as well as to hear. Fortunately, most subjects are capable of being made visible, to some small extent at least.

What has already been said about the use of concrete words and phrases will help to make your remarks visual in expression. In addition, you must remember to speak to the imagination as well as to the intellect. A short, excellent example may be taken from St. Paul's reminder to his Corinthian converts that he was teaching them elementary and not advanced doctrine. He uses a fairly abstract expression, and follows it by a concrete statement which appeals to the imagination. It gives a tiny picture.



“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal. As unto little ones in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not meat to eat: for you were not able as yet.”

(I Cor. 3. 1-2.)

Here those who listened to the reading of the Apostle's letter saw him feeding little children and *saw* what he meant.

A completely different kind of illustration will show you that words can appeal to more senses than those of hearing and sight. Read the closing lines of Rupert Brooke's great poem *Grantchester*. You will already have noticed that this poet's compositions often appeal to more than one sense, as in the list of loves in *The Great Lover*:—

“Wet roofs, beneath the lamplight; the strong crusts  
Of friendly bread; the many-tasting food;  
Rainbows; and the blue bitter smoke of wood;  
And radiant raindrops crouching in cool flowers;  
And flowers themselves, that sway through sunny hours,  
Dreaming of moths that drink them under the moon;  
Then, the cool kindness of sheets, that soon  
Smooth away trouble; and the rough male kiss  
Of blankets . . .”

In *Grantchester* again you see, smell, hear, taste, feel and pass beyond physical sense to that emotion which is a sixth sense. This poem is filled with home-sickness for the sun-soaked, peaceful, perfumed land of England:—

“Ah God! to see the branches stir  
Across the moon at Grantchester!  
To smell the thrilling-sweet and rotten  
Unforgettable, unforgotten  
River-smell, and hear the breeze  
Sobbing in the little trees.”

Presently the poet draws all these impressions into a sense picture, under more general symbols appealing to intellect as well as imagination:—

“ And after, ere the night is born,  
Do hares come out about the corn?  
Oh, is the water sweet and cool,  
Gentle and brown, above the pool?  
And laughs the immortal river still  
Under the mill, under the mill?  
Say, is there Beauty yet to find?  
And Certainty? And Quiet kind?  
Deep meadows yet, for to forget  
The lies, and truths, and pain? . . . oh! yet  
Stands the church clock at ten to three?  
And is there honey still for tea? ”

The last two lines call into the mind far more than the two simple facts they mention. This gives you an idea of the depth of visual expression. By practice in it, you will find yourself increasingly able to use words and phrases which bring into listeners' minds not only single ideas, but also associated ideas. That is a quick way to the forming of mental pictures. The lines quoted here are worth many pages of descriptive prose.

We are not going to pause here to enter the alluring topic of where prose ceases and becomes poetry. Or, of course, where poetry rises to become prose, as more than one poet has preferred to outline the debate. But we must delay long enough to note that an aid to visual expression is poetry-reading. That is partly why many examples in this book are poetic. Poetry is the distilled essence of the mind's contents. Consequently every word must be filled to capacity and every phrase per-



fectured. Poetry has a wonderful economy of word and phrase which is worth study. If you are hesitant about poetry-reading, see if you cannot find pleasure in a poetic novel, E. B. Browning's *The Brothers*, or take some frankly narrative poem, old or modern, such as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* or *The Ballad of the White Horse*. In poetry you will learn valuable lessons about what is concrete and visual. Every book of poetry is a text-book for the public speaker.

4. *Be Precise in Details.* The preceding point will have suggested to you the need for precision, but exactness has a virtue of its own, apart from its indirect help in attaining vividness of speech. By itself it is an aid to imagination. You should check what you have written or thought out by way of expression by asking yourself, “Is it concrete enough? Is it visual? Is it exact and detailed?” You will see the reason for this if you take as an example “The girl in red crossed the street”. This has all the qualities we are aiming at, except the last. It is better to say, “The girl in the red costume crossed through the traffic”.

I think that makes our point clear enough. Now for a word of warning. Do not crowd your speech with details. There is always the listener's mind to be considered, with its own activity. Possibly you are sufficiently aware of the working of your own mind to know that it always adds a great deal to everything you hear or read. A good novelist knows how much detail to put into his writing, so as to allow for what the reader's mind will add.

You can test this by thinking over a scene from a novel which is familiar to you—David's falling asleep in the inn at the beginning of Hugh Walpole's *Rogue Herries*, for instance. Picture the scene again for yourself until it is clearly recalled. Then take the book and read it once more. You will be amazed when you find how much you have added to the details provided by the author.

This is a valuable lesson. It teaches you always to provide plenty of detail, but not too much. If you break this rule, the minds of your listeners will be dazed and wearied by all you pass into them. Worse still, the task of accepting all this mass will prevent them from acting themselves, so that you talk to paralysed brains, which is a bad waste of time.

5. *Use Repetition.* Each mind in your audience is made differently from any other about it. It has its own natural formation and habits of thought, its own outlook, its own amount of knowledge, its individual alertness of perception—in short, each mind has its own particular shape. That is a convenient and understandable way of summing up all the differences between your mind and mine.

The speaker's mind also has its own shape, so that his ideas are moulded by it, and may not easily fit into every mind they are sent to. You must be aware of this fact in making your speech, and be prepared to put your ideas into various forms, in order to help every mind which is trying to accept them. The only way to do this is to repeat your ideas.



A professor whose lectures I attended at one time made frequent use of repetition, to the great advantage of his students. From him I learned the right way of repeating information or thoughts, for there is certainly a right way and a wrong way of trying to help listeners by this method. It is quite useless to say the same thing several times, with slight alteration of words. That is monotonous, and has the greater fault of not achieving the only purpose of repetition. The ideas more than the words which express them must be altered in form. Each repetition should offer a slightly different viewpoint. Notice how we can describe the work of a musical conductor:—

“The conductor strives to bring both correct time and harmony to the performance of a composition. He is preoccupied in maintaining balance amongst the instruments. Every member of the orchestra depends on him, not only for time, but for guidance in the tone and volume of his own instrument in relation to all the other instrumental parts of the piece. It is as if the conductor were playing an orchestra. Each musician is contributing something to the total musical effect, and is aware that he and the conductor are one in effect.”

There you have the same idea repeated three times, once from the conductor's angle, once from the individual musician's and once from a point of view which embraces both. To give people time to grasp an idea, and to assist every mind in receiving

it, always think of three or four ways of expressing it. Move your own mind about in front of the idea, so that you can see it from different angles. Then present each view to the audience.

Of course, you get the same effect by maintaining one viewpoint, provided that you divide it. Keeping to our example, notice how repetition is achieved by looking at it from the conductor's point of view only.

"The conductor must see that the wood-wind does not submerge the music of the 'cello's; that the energy of the violins does not produce a sharpness which is at variance with the general orchestral tone and effect; that the horns produce exactly the right effect of smoothness or attack which is fitting to the mood of the composition."

Here the viewpoint has not been changed; it has been developed so that, while your idea wanders amongst the instruments of the orchestra, it is actually being guided to the full revelation of your thought. Repetition is a most interesting oratorical device to practice. It is essential to clear expression of thought and, fortunately for the speaker, demands honest thinking over every idea. It is good for speaker and listener.

6. *Use Figures of Speech.* Here we come to a part of the speaker's art about which whole books have been written. Some speakers almost neglect it, while others are far too figurative in their utterances. They present their ideas in "precious" language which strains after effect and, under an imagery too abundant, is luxurious and strange.



The beginner who seriously tries to use figurative language usually fails by over-doing the work. But it is a good fault, provided the speaker is willing to accept criticism and alter his style, for it is better and easier to lessen a fault than to fall short of the aim.

“Oh, the little more, and how much it is;  
The little less, and how far away!”

A sermon I once heard (and I suspect it was the young preacher's first public discourse) almost sickened the congregation by the exuberance of its imagery. The roses of sin were indeed consumed to the ashes of repentance and the golden streams of forgiveness flowed into the soul, reviving it to life and cleansing it to innocence. All the figures of speech were there, far too vivid in their appeal to the imagination and presenting a most ludicrous appearance by their failure to harmonise. The rule is to use imagery boldly, but not recklessly. And don't be hurt if a friend tells you that you are losing the thread of your ideas in a sea of figures which is strangling them. The reckless use of figures of speech in that sentence may help you to see how dreadful excess of riotous imagery can be. In other words, use figures of speech, but keep them under control.

Now for a few ways in which you can sharpen the effect of what you say.

If you find it useful, you can Personify the Abstract. One of the best examples of this kind of figure of speech is found in an address by John Bright. As a member of the Peace Society, he

strenuously opposed the Crimean War, and one of his speeches during the war contained his most celebrated conclusion:—

“ I cannot but notice that an uneasy feeling exists as to the news that may arrive by the very next mail from the East; I do not suppose that your troops are to be beaten in actual conflict with the foe, or that they will be driven into the sea; but I am certain that many homes in England in which there now exists a fond hope that the distant one may return—many such homes will be rendered desolate when the next mail shall arrive. The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one, as when the first-born was slain of old, to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two sideposts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on: he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and lowly, and it is on behalf of all these classes that I make this solemn appeal.”

Notice how definite and concrete the whole peroration is, and how much is added to it by the Personification of death. Notice, too, the number of pictures which these few lines bring into your mind—the mail packet, the angel (in three pictures) and the homes of England, the waiting families. It is not to be wondered at that the passage will live as long as our language. It haunts the memory.



Another figure of speech which you will often use is Metaphor. This is a special kind of Simile (that simple figure of speech by which one thing is compared with another—e.g., *he was blown along like a leaf before the wind*). Whereas in Simile you point out the similarity between dissimilar things, in Metaphor you not only speak more briefly, but you apply to something a description which is not objectively applicable to it—e.g., *piercing eyes, biting words, freezing glance*. By a quick joining of dissimilar things by a feature of similarity, a certain mental illumination occurs, like the flash of a spark from metal and flint. Your listener sees your idea and understands it more quickly than if you were to express it by a careful explanation without the aid of metaphor. By this figure of speech you may describe a man as being as brave as a lion (bravery being the similar feature between the man and the brute), and you need say nothing more to express your meaning. The metaphor has the added advantage of enabling your audience to see similarities you do not mention; it has a power of suggestiveness which is useful. *Brave as a lion*, for instance, suggests that a certain ruthlessness accompanies the man's courage.

It is scarcely necessary to remind you not to use too many metaphors and not to mix your metaphors. Perhaps the most famous example of mixed metaphor is, “I smell a rat. . . . I will nip it in the bud”.

A figure of speech which often has an effect like that of Personification is Hyperbole. It consists of an exaggeration or diminution of something beyond

or below its real state. "He ran as swift as lightning", or "Her brow was white as snow", are obvious examples. The purpose of the figure is emphasis; and that is chiefly why Hyperbole and Personification often accompany each other. As an example:—

"His sword woke to life in his hand, darting amongst his foes like a serpent, biting and killing wherever it struck."

The work of the sword in battle is remarkable enough to carry Hyperbole; not everything else is, which means that you must not use this figure of speech in connection with things which are in any way insignificant. If you do, you accomplish only an unnatural straining for effect which is repellant.

Finally, look at a piece of sustained Hyperbole:—

"England ne'er had a king until his time;  
Virtue he had, deserving to command;  
His brandish'd sword did blind men with its beams;  
His arms spread wider than a dragon's wings;  
His sparkling eyes, replete with awful fire,  
More dazzled and drove back his enemies  
Than midday sun fierce bent against their faces."

Ordinary comparison scarcely needs mention as a figure of speech, but it is well to refer to it to point out that, in really effective use, Comparison must be smooth and natural. Usually it confines itself to two things which can be perceived by the same sense—*e.g.*, it would be clumsy to say, "He saw that the surface was as smooth as a peach". You feel surfaces, although sight can tell you their appearance. "He noticed" would be sufficient in



that sentence. Better still, leave the observer out of it and make the wholly objective comment, “The surface was as smooth as a peach”. However, do not make this rule too hard and fast, for it is quite permissible to make comparisons which are more complicated, as those between external reality and something in the mind—*e.g.*, the observation that music lingers like a memory. This does not refer to any memory of music, but to its “dying fall”, which lingers in the sense of hearing as a memory dwells in the mind. An even more complicated kind of comparison, between an objective reality and something which has an immaterial reality, is also possible and effective. Gray’s *Elegy* contains many examples:—

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
The dark unfathom’d caves of ocean bear;  
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.”

The comparison is between the unknown and unknowable beauties of Nature and the undiscovered genius buried in undeveloped minds and souls.

7. Other forms of figurative language might be listed here, but the use of irony is not everyone’s gift, and the smaller devices for attracting attention, such as hyperbaton, metonymy and the rest, are for your private taste and study. There are many books which will tell you all about them, but here we have thought of all the forms of figurative speech which are necessary to most public speakers.

We end the chapter with a piece of advice which, in practice, keeps the balance between the neglect

and the excessive use of imagery. Do not make it one of the first aims of your addresses, for it is partly an adornment. Too much of it will spoil what you have to say, just as excessive ornament will spoil anything with a purpose, whether the thing be a table lamp, a railway engine, a sonata or a speech. At the same time, do not neglect it. Few speeches are not improved by one or more of the artistic devices outlined in the preceding few pages.



## CHAPTER IX

### CHOICE OF WORDS

THE large section of this course of study which deals with persuasion and the happy presentation of your speech must include reflection on words. Words are to speech what clothes are to the body. A well-dressed lady or gentleman is quickly noticed and easily remembered; a speech in carefully chosen words impresses listeners and remains in their minds. The orator Cicero recalled, with approval, Cæsar's saying that the right choice of words is the very source of eloquence.

You will understand this if you trouble to think what a word is. It is a sound representing an idea. In itself it is nothing; we could easily arrange that books should be called turnips and that speech should be called coal. The thing behind the word, the reality in the mind which the sound represents, would remain the same whatever verbal convention we might choose for its expression. The only important thing about the established custom of expressing ideas by conventional sounds is that, through use over a long period of time, the exact use of these sounds to convey various shades of meaning has become well developed. In some languages, especially those belonging to races gifted with considerable imagination, vocabularies of astonishing

range have resulted. In Gaelic, for instance, even the almost illiterate have a wider choice of words than the highly educated people of other tongues. They have several words to express "child", and definite words to represent a child sleeping, sitting, talking, etc. The choice of the wrong word is immediately obvious, to anyone who knows what is meant, when there is such an extensive vocabulary to choose from. English people are less fortunate in the range of their ordinary working vocabulary, and have to add adjectives to nouns to reach clarity of expression—*e.g.*, all the adjectives you have to add to the word "child" to signify the various states of the child you wish to describe.

Consequently while the attachment of sounds to ideas is first almost arbitrary, and later settled by convention, the development of language means that the conventional words gain in importance as they are accepted as representing definite aspects of ideas. Choice of words, particularly where they are uniform instead of various, is of the highest importance. Those who have used the craft of words in English-speaking countries have necessarily realised that the right word must be found for every idea. The poet Spenser tried to widen the selection of words by the advice of hyphenating. "Heart-wounding", "rosy-fingered" are among his lovely inventions. Although the method has often been abused, our great writers followed Spenser's example, with their "incense-breathing morn" and "death-counterfeiting sleep". Men whose life's work was the finding of the right word for the



expression of their thought have placed a good store of words at our disposal and, by their efforts, have taught us to be careful in choosing wisely from our inheritance.

The speaker, since his aim is to persuade others to adopt his ideas, is necessarily interested in this work of stating his thoughts in unmistakably clear words. We have seen that his first duty is to think clearly. Then he must consider how he may work on his listener's minds so as to fit his thoughts into them. All this work is wasted unless he goes farther, to choose words which will make that transference of thought both easy and pleasant for the audience. In preparing the words he is to use, the speaker must use the right words—the words which give his exact meaning. The younger Chatham has recorded that his father used daily to make him translate the Latin classics as an exercise in practising accurate speech. He was compelled to find word after word before his father was satisfied that he had found the word in English which corresponded to the word of the Latin author. It is surely this infinite care in searching for the right word which gives the translations of Miss Helen Waddell their remarkable felicity, for she achieves exactness without being forced to the use of unusual words.

“ O blandos oculos et inquietos . . . ”

(O laughing, restless eyes that speak!)

“ O quanta qualia  
sunt illa sabbata,  
Quae semper celebrat  
superna curia . . . ”

(How mighty are the Sabbaths,  
How mighty and how deep,  
That the high courts of heaven  
To everlasting keep.)

The speaker should be as careful in his choice of words as literary artists or as the painter in the choice of shades, lights and shadows. This truth holds good for business addresses as much as for speeches less restricted or technical in language. For in every form of the language there is the right word and the word which, because it is not the best, is the wrong word.

Now let us go a step nearer to the words about which we are thinking. Quite apart from the question of what word exactly expresses our meaning, we know that all words have associations which influence our choice. These associations call into mind a sort of mood or picture; they form a background to the main idea suggested by the word. They are often summed up as a word's "colour". You will appreciate what this means by noting the effect on you, as apart from their direct meaning, of the words *smiling*, *placid*, *white*, *dreary*, *clanging*. All these words have a personal effect on each of us due to individual experience, but they also have an effect in which we all share to some extent. For instance, *white* always carries an association of smoothness with it.

It is clear, then, that speakers must choose their words with both precision of meaning and "colour" in mind. There is a third influence in choice of words which must also be taken into account.



This is the euphony of words. Some words are pleasanter than others to listen to; some are pleasanter to pronounce, because they are easy to the tongue, teeth and lips, and because their rhythm is attractive. I know that allowing for euphony as well as for meaning and colour may appear to you to be making public speaking difficult and too "artistic". Not at all. You must allow for these three features of vocabulary if you are to speak with practical success. Your aim is to please and persuade. You must therefore use words to their best advantage or, should we not really say, you must allow words to give their best advantage to you.

Without going into any elaborate example, suppose a tiny and quite incidental phrase in your speech were, "The sun came up". It is more pleasing, colourful and even easier to say, "The sun rose". Then why not take care to say it? Words are your means of producing effects. Use them to the full. It would be a ridiculous waste of vocabulary to speak of "The sound of leaves pleased him during these months" when you can say, "He was pleased by the rustle of leaves in late spring and their crackling in the white heat of summer".

These few pages are probably enough to show you the importance of a right choice of words. Those who are used to the "sober words" of St. Paul's phrase may be alarmed at the thought that a speaker must be able to charm up the magic of

"Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd"

before he is master of his art. Again let me assure you that you need not be a magician. Every speaker has a vocabulary suited to his purpose, whether it be the free wide realm of the poet or the comparatively restricted range open to the man whose duty is to address actuaries and others whose work is material and specialised. The point you must keep in mind is that, whatever vocabulary is suited to your addresses, it certainly has many words with "colour" and euphony. They should have a priority when you select the dress you are to make for the body of your speech.

It is evident that you are not being urged to fill your Word Book with gems like *argent*, *azured*, *diamonded*, for you have to consider not only meaning, "colour" and euphony, but the three other elements of subject, purpose and audience. An audience of limited education is unlikely to be impressed by the use of words rarely found outside poetry books; neither will an audience of scholars pay much attention to an address delivered in slovenly English. Subject, purpose, audience; meaning, "colour", euphony. There are the six points to remember when you are clothing your speech. The first three we have spent a good deal of time in thinking about; now we may study how to employ the last three in the art of persuasion.

To begin with, never use words for the sake of conscious effect. It is in bad taste, and, worse still, it is apart from your purpose, which is persuasion and not self-exhibition. You should neither try to impress by the outward show of your words nor by



the number and fluency of those words, for this is to commit the crime which Holofernes attributed to Don Adriano de Armado:—

“He draweth out the thread of his verbosity finer than the staple of his argument.”

(*Love's Labour Lost*, Act 5, Sc. 1.)

Indeed, the whole procedure may be expressed as Holofernes bombastically explained it:—

“I abhor such fanatical phantasms, such insociable and point-device companions; such rackers of orthography, as to speak dout, fine, when he should say doubt; det, when he should pronounce debt,—d, e, b, t, not d, e, t: he clepeth a calf, cauf; half, hauf; neighbour *vocatur* nebour; neigh abbreviateth ne. This is abhominable,—which he would call abbominable: it insinuateth me of insanie: *ne intelligis, domine?* to make frantic, lunatic.”

And with that murderous attack on pretension in speech we can leave the speaker whose first aim is to persuade his audience to admire him and whose Particular Purpose is always secondary. Art is the hiding of art, and none of the means of persuasion you employ should be so used as to attempt self-glorification, which is insincere and quite futile.

After that warning, we look to see what we are to do in the choice of words. The following guiding principles will help you in the task.

1. Whenever it is useful to do so, choose onomatopœic words. These are the sounds which imitate

the idea they express. All children know what is meant by a "bow-wow". They see a dog as well as hear him when you use that word. Adults can be helped to quick and lasting perception of your thought if you use words which are imitative, like *clatter*, *hiss*, *whirr*. Always remember not to emphasise the fact that you are deliberately using onomatopœic words, for undue notice of the fact may displease your listeners, who may suspect exhibitionism. In any case, too many words of this kind are tiresome. The same applies to the use of alliteration. It is useful, but must not be used to excess.

2. Other words are not really imitative, but they are certainly suggestive of what they express. Examples are numerous: *flare*, *shimmer*, *shudder*, *blare*, *peal*. Think of a dozen for yourself by way of mental exercise. The use of such words brightens a speech and gives it both vividness and an appeal to the imagination. It also makes your sentences musical. Tennyson made great use of words full of onomatopœia and of suggestion, and you may learn much of the art by reading his poems. Here are two examples from his pen, the first of onomatopœia and the second of the less imitative kind of word:—

"I heard the water lapping on the crag,  
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

The second quotation Tennyson considered to be the finest line in all his compositions:—

"The mellow ouzel fluting in the elm."

Whatever you may think about that as the poet's



most perfect line, from the point of view of a right choice of words, it is certainly musical with the bird's song. You and I would probably have to speak to our audience about "The bird singing in the tree", but the line shows us the direction in which we ought to move from that colourless statement.

Why words have this strange quality of suggestion is not a question there is space here to discuss. Students of language hold various theories about it. The practical point for us is to realise that it exists, and that it evokes an emotional response in an audience which is important for anyone trying to gain influence. It can call up a mood and form an emotional background which is invaluable. For instance, notice the charm and the slight suggestion of the supernatural which are in the words and music of *The Lady of Shalott*:—

4 "Willows whiten, aspens quiver,  
? Little breezes dusk and shiver  
Thro' the wave that runs for ever  
By the island in the river  
Flowing down to Camelot.  
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,  
Overlook a space of flowers,  
And the silent isle imbowers  
The Lady of Shalott."

In your reading and listening, look out for these effects and study to find their causes. Acquire a sensitiveness to the suggestive and musical qualities of words which a study of good speakers and writers will give you. Twelve words can give a complete picture, as when Sir Bedivere carries the wounded king, Arthur, to

“ . . . a chapel nigh the field,  
A broken chancel with a broken cross.”

In fact, the poet enables us to hear as well to see as what is happening in his narrative:—

“ . . . So sighed the King,  
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, ‘Quick, quick!  
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.’  
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,  
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk’d,  
Larger than human on the frozen hills.  
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry  
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.  
Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves  
And barren chasms, and all to left and right  
The bare black cliff clang’d round him as he based  
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang  
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—  
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,  
And the long glories of the winter moon.”

That is what a master of words can do. With patience and care this mastery can become yours. Go back over that extract and analyse in it what called up in your mind things which are not directly stated in the poem. What musical quality thrilled you exactly when Tennyson wanted you to be thrilled?

Now turn to an example entirely different. It is the conclusion of the speech on the Irish Question which Gladstone delivered in Liverpool, in June 1886. Notice how quietly the passage opens and how, as the mental picture broadens, the language grows more generous and spacious. Notice how the orator gives an effect of simple grandeur by increasing the number of “open” sounding words, *powers*, *require*, *honour*, *notes*, *reign*, and others. When you



have read it several times and know the meaning thoroughly, read the passage for sound only, marking how the sound changes to accompany the meaning, like an instrumental accompaniment.

“ In that touching address which was presented to me at the beginning of our proceedings, I was reminded that in this city I first drew breath. I have drawn it, gentlemen, for seventy-six years, and the time cannot be far distant when I must submit to the universal law, and pay the debt of nature. It may be these words I speak to you are the last I shall ever have the opportunity of speaking in Liverpool. I say that to you—well, it is in better hands than ours. I say that to you, gentlemen, to show you that I am conscious of the deep solemnity of the occasion, and of the great controversy which has been raised between nation and nation. I wish we could expand our minds and raise our views to a point necessary to understand what these controversies really are, how deep their roots go down, what enormous results they produce upon the peace and happiness of mankind, and through what enormous periods of time they extend. Many of you will recollect, in the spirited old ballad of ‘ Chevy Chase ’ :

The child that is unborn shall rue  
The hunting of that day.

And so, should you fail in your duties on this occasion, should the idle and shallow pretexts

that are used against us, bewilder the minds of the people of England or of Scotland, or should the power of the purse of wealth and the title of station, of rank—should all these powers overbear the national sense, I fear it may again be true that the child that is unborn shall rue the voting of that day. I entreat you—you require it little—but I entreat, through you, the people of this country to bethink themselves well of the position in which they stand, to look back upon the history of the past, and forwards at the prospects of the future, to determine that it shall be no longer said throughout the civilized world that Ireland is the Poland of England. We have had it long enough. Listen to prudence; listen to courage; listen to honour, and speak the words of the poet:

Ring out the old, ring in the new.

Ring out the notes and the memory of discord;  
ring in the blessed reign and time of peace."

Perhaps these contrasting quotations from Tennyson and Gladstone have helped you to understand the necessity of your studying the use of words, even though you are aiming at becoming a Public Speaker and not a Poet. You can see how the statesman can adapt the principles of good choice of words to his purpose. In the same way, a lady speaking about care of a sick-room will not describe the room as Keats pictured Madeline's room in *The Eve of St. Agnes*. Her description will be plain



and practical, but her choice of words for it should follow the principles which Keats followed—to find the right words to promote the effect desired.

There is yet a most important use of words which has not been mentioned in this chapter. So far we have thought about the effect of words which comes from what we may call their contents—that is, their meaning, associations and euphony.

Now, it is necessary to pay close attention to an effect of words which comes from their size. Your reading has probably shown you that short words are powerful words. In the last eighteen words of Gladstone's speech quoted above you may have noticed that fifteen are monosyllables. You may make it a rule to be brief and monosyllabic in the climax of your address. Any passage of high importance will be effective if it is monosyllabic and, in delivery, quiet and slow. Many a good speech has been less successful because the speaker "spread" himself in the critical parts of his message. By length, he became tedious; his audience grew weary. He would have been wiser to put his point briefly, in short, powerful words, delivered at a slower rate than the rest of his speech.

Some people acquire a habit of monosyllabic speech. The best example is of the man who appeared to answer, "Yes", to every question.

"Do you understand what I am asking you?"

"Yes."

"For goodness' sake, say something else. Could you possibly say less than 'Yes'?"

"No."

Too much of a thing spoils it, but it is a good thing to practise the habit of using brief words in your ordinary conversation. The art of brief expression has almost been lost, so that people either talk with far too many words or they take the short cut of using slang and bad English.

If you read the addresses and records of conversations of two and three hundred years ago, you will be struck by the brevity of word and expression then practised. For instance, take the unpremeditated interjection of Oliver Cromwell, who thumped the table at a Council meeting, and broke out:—

“ I tell you, sir, you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them, or they will break you; yea, and bring all the guilt of the blood and treasure shed and spent in this kingdom upon your heads and shoulders, and frustrate and make void all that work that, with so many years' industry, toil and pains, you have done. . . .”

To speak like that nowadays would be, of course, affected, but the quotation shows how monosyllables add power and brevity to your remarks. When the war cemetery at Gettysburg was opened an astonishing example of this fact came into permanent existence. The foremost American orator of the day spoke for over two hours. He was followed by Abraham Lincoln, whose address lasted but a few minutes. Anyone who has read it



can never forget it. You remember the plain and powerful opening:—

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure.”

Lincoln's was one of the shortest speeches on record, and one of the greatest. Where is its secret? Brevity is certainly part of it, and monosyllables are part of its brevity. Three out of five words are monosyllabic.

Another striking example is to be found in Shylock's speech to Salarino in *The Merchant of Venice*. His point is that Jews and Christians alike are men, and that as men they are equal and deserve equitable treatment.

“I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, heal'd by the same means, warm'd and cool'd by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? if we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew  
E

wrong a Christian, what is his humility? revenge: if a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction."

A number of points may be noted in that speech—its concreteness and repetition, for instance. Our interest in it, however, lies in the fact that 119 of its 145 words are monosyllabic. And in that part of the speech which is the strongest part of Shylock's attack there are forty-seven words. Only four of them have more than one syllable.

It is most interesting to compare the speech with that delivered in court by Portia. Here a more elevated style is desirable, an appeal to lofty motives is to be made. Word-beauty must be given its opportunity to move the audience. Therefore there are fewer monosyllables, since polysyllabic words allow a more musical rhythm, so that the sustained passage gains in verbal dignity. Great art lies in the skill by which the monosyllables are more frequent in the early lines of the speech. Portia wants to establish the idea of mercy; therefore she speaks with power and slow delivery. Once the idea has had time to sink into the minds of her hearers, she can develop it rapidly and begin to work on their sense of personal guilt and need for mercy. Monosyllables are less frequent; rolling polysyllables rouse emotion and, just before the end, a recurrence of monosyllabic speech to gain effect. Read the



passage several times, and listen for the effect after you have become familiar with the meaning.

“ The quality of mercy is not strain'd,—  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest,—  
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,—  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,—  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. I have spoken thus much  
To mitigate the justice of thy plea;  
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice  
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.”

The examples given have made clear the proper use of monosyllabic words, and you now have at your disposal verbal means of conveying your carefully prepared thoughts into the minds of listeners.

It is wise to end with a note of encouragement, which may sound like a note of warning. You will probably find, when you first pay close attention to the precepts of this chapter, that they contain more than you suspect. You might be betrayed into an excessively ornate style. A manuscript I once saw, with a carefully written speech in it, had an interesting alteration. The speaker had written

something about a girl who "will not easily be hurried into matrimony". This he had altered to "will not be rushed to the hymeneal altar". When questioned about the change, his defence was that *rushed* is more expressive [too expressive] than *hurried*; *altar* lent the phrase a touch of sacred dignity [not required by the context]; and *hymeneal* was rather more poetic and exalted than any other word connected with altars and matrimony [which is doubtful and, anyway, he was a speaker, not a poet]. Don't become too elaborate. However jewelled the words you may allow yourself, remember that simplicity must never be lost.

There are other difficulties, too, which you will meet. Do not let any of them discourage you. Read and listen, take notice and think. If you are not already gifted with the power of words, you will find that one day your ear will suddenly begin to guide you; your imagination will begin to respond to the magic of words; the very enunciation of words will become enjoyable. Then you will find growing in you this strange power by which you can use words almost like magic spells. Like the amateur golfer who, with all proper respect to him, is intent on a less worthy aim than you, forget every failure and disappointment; come fresh to your task every time. Patience and perseverance will overcome every difficulty in time. You have ability; don't shirk the practice:—

" 'Tis not in mortals to command success,  
But we'll do more, Sempronius; we'll deserve it."  
(Addison's *Cato*, Act 1, Sc. 2.)



## CHAPTER X

### HOW TO OPEN A SPEECH

THE first question to be settled in introducing your speech is the length of the introduction. Inexperienced speakers often take far too much liberty in speaking at length before telling their listeners the subject to be considered. The first rule to observe is to announce your subject almost as soon as you rise to your feet. There is no awkwardness in doing this, for your opening sentences should lead quietly to the announcement. From that point the introduction should pass naturally into the main body of the address. The question is how much time to allow yourself for this work of announcing your subject and then of knitting it to what is to follow.

It is often taken for granted that the introduction should be about one-tenth of the length of the whole speech. Like all rules-of-thumb, this is a safe guide, provided that it is not regarded as a fixed law. Perhaps it is best to say that the introduction of a long speech should not be more than one-tenth of the whole. Where your speech is brief, such as a five minutes' Vote of Thanks, the proportions of the speech, as to Introduction, Main Body and Conclusion, are suggested to be in the ratio of 1 : 3 : 1. In my opinion, the last one should be only one half. That is because the Conclusion, strictly so called,

to be really effective should be noticeably brief. Again, this proportion is a good guide; it is variable, however. The Introduction should be brief and, as the next chapter shows, the Conclusion should be even shorter.

The methods of opening a speech are numerous enough to give the speaker plenty of choice. We may begin by reviewing the most dangerous and, unfortunately, the most popular with a certain type of inexperienced speaker. It is the Humorous Introduction.

Admittedly, it can be most effective. It has its uses, which no other kind of opening can offer, but it has its marked dangers. If you are new to your audience, you are not familiar with its sense of humour, nor is it always certain to grasp yours at first acquaintance. Remember that, while humour is remarkably the same everywhere, humour in public is a different matter, and reception of it has many modifications in different parts of the country. Any professional humorist can give you salutary lessons about that. You should never attempt a humorous opening unless you are certain of your audience.

If you do use this kind of introduction, you can take it for granted that an anecdote or a few witty remarks are not sufficient for your purpose.

“You may not know the story of the two flies, mother and daughter, who walked down the head of a bald man. The mother fly said, ‘How time passes! Last time I walked along



here, it was only a foot-path.' Well, I haven't had the pleasure of being here with you before, but I am glad to have the privilege of addressing you to-night."

That sort of humorous opening is useless. The anecdote which is not connected with the announcement of your subject and which cannot lead into the main part of your speech is not an introduction. If you think about it, you will realise that it is as silly as taking a bone with you when you visit someone for the first time, and throwing it to his dog as you walk towards the house. But if you make the bringing of something for his dog and the handing over of it to its master the purpose of your visit, then you have arranged an introduction. The bone leads you somewhere.

Here is an example of how an anecdote can open a speech.

"Owing to the sudden indisposition of the local chapel organist, a Manchester cinema organist was recently asked to take his place at short notice for the annual rendering of *The Messiah*. He played the organ as it had never been played before, and the amateur choir managed to keep up with this unusual musical splendour. When the cantata was some two-thirds completed, the organ droned to silence and the musician sent an urgent message round to the pumper. A venerable man then appeared from the back of the organ gallery, with a face which clearly showed his disapproval

of the organist's departures from local tradition. 'Ah 've pumped t' organ i' this chappill for forty-five year,' this worthy said slowly. 'And Ah knows well there's nine hundred and twelve pumps to t' *Messiah*. Whether tha's ended or not, tha's 'ad 'em.'

"And that seems to be the attitude of the local bureaucrats of our Council. Their rules are not made for us; we are fitted to the rules."

Here the story is united to the statement of your subject and to what follows it—an address of protest against the local regulations.

Sometimes you may prefer to open your speech by humorous remarks instead of a story. In this opening, some remark of the Chairman or a previous speaker can give you a happy opportunity. The same rule applies, of course. Whatever you say must lead naturally to your subject and ensuing opinion.

"You have said, Mr. Chairman, that I have come to an ancient city of narrow streets and old buildings, and you have asked me to believe that its citizens are not so out-of-date as the age of their buildings might suggest. Believe me, I did not expect to find that the old ways had been widened and the overhanging houses pulled down, for that would not reflect credit upon the residents of this city. No, my reflections as I walked through these old causeways were not unfavourable to your reputation. I thought that the civilisation of to-day is rooted



in the past; that the culture and manners of the people who built these old houses is what is still saving some security for us to-day; that the traditions which have left their mark on your city are those we must preserve in turn for those who walk these streets after our time. The courage and vision of your forefathers are the foundation of our new buildings, and it is the character, if it is retained, of those who walked these crooked, narrow streets, which alone can save the broad, spacious avenues of the world's younger and unhappier cities. From these ways and the men of these ancient homes came the spirit which we must cling to and develop to-day if we are to advance along broadening paths of progress."

Here is a half-humorous, half-serious opening to a speech on Modern Civilisation. It observes the principles already laid down for the use of this kind of introduction.

Another kind of introduction we may call the Personal Type. It can be used fairly often with success, especially if you are a stranger to the audience or if your subject is in any way surprising to it. You tell the audience why you are speaking on that subject, *e.g.*, because you are an authority on it or have had unique personal experience of it. Perhaps you speak to this particular audience precisely because you are a stranger with no axe to grind, or perhaps your reason is the opposite—you are a local man, and therefore have a good

knowledge of local conditions. In opening your speech, then, you introduce yourself.

Of course, the reason for using this introduction may be subtler than the instances given. When William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, wished to oppose the employment of Indian troops, although approval had been expressed in the Speech from the Throne, he first gave personal objection as his reason for speaking, and then quietly united his listeners with that disapproval. You may see in this a method of suggesting the unity appeal which we studied in Chapter VII.

“ I rise, my lords, to declare my sentiments on this most solemn and serious subject. It has imposed a load upon my mind, which, I fear, nothing can now remove; but which impels me to endeavour its alleviation, by a free and unreserved communication of my sentiments.

“ In the first part of the address I have the honour of heartily concurring with the noble earl who moved it. No man feels sincerer than I do; none can offer more genuine congratulation on every accession of strength to the Protestant succession; I therefore join in every congratulation on the birth of another Princess, and the happy recovery of Her Majesty. But I must stop here; my courtly complaisance will carry me no further: I will not join in congratulation on misfortune and disgrace; I cannot concur in a blind and servile address, which approves and endeavours to



sanctify the monstrous measures that have heaped disgrace and misfortune upon us—that have brought ruin to our doors. This, my lords, is a perilous and tremendous moment! It is not a time for adulation. The smoothness of flattery cannot now avail—cannot save us in this rugged and awful crisis. It is now necessary to instruct the throne in the language of truth. We must dispel the delusion and the darkness which envelop it; and display, in its full danger and true colours, the ruin that is brought to our doors.

“ This, my lords, is our duty; it is the proper function of this noble assembly, sitting, as we do, upon our honours in this house, the hereditary council of the Crown. And *who* is the minister—*where* is the minister, that has dared to suggest to the throne the contrary, unconstitutional language, this day delivered from it? ”

The orator here identifies himself, his feelings, with the protest he is about to make, and then unites the Upper House with it and himself. The introduction of the subject here is skilfully done, almost unnoticeably. That is a lesson for those whose opening too often consists of “ To-night I shall speak on . . . ”

If you stress your subject rather than yourself, the opening is more one of Occasion than of Person. Like the Personal opening, the Occasional method is popular and useful, since you can adapt it to almost any subject. You may be speaking of

a certain industry, because it is to be brought to the district, or you may be about to explain a method of cooking a certain kind of food because it is now available for the first time. It is a good thing, whenever it can be done, to link the Occasional opening to something topical—*e.g.*, an address on architecture with the building or repair of some well-known edifice in the town.

There are three points which it is wise to work into this kind of opening if your subject allows them. The first is to explain very briefly the intrinsic importance of your subject; the second, its interest to your audience rather than to any other audience; the third, to show why it is worth investigation here and now.

In these points you can see the only danger to be guarded against—the number of possible ways of using the opening can draw you into too great length. The same danger also provides this introduction's greatest advantage, which probably explains its popularity—the variety of openings makes it fresh and interesting. Develop this angle of it, and beware of making the introduction disproportionately long.

The General Introduction is a most interesting one for the speaker during his preparation, since it requires clear thinking, and also for the audience when it is clearly and brightly employed. There must be nothing dull or pedantic about it. It consists of the statement of a general principle, which is then narrowed down to a particular application, which is the subject of the address. For



example, suppose that you are to speak on Infection. You might begin by stating the principle that Life lives on Life. Man lives on animals and plants; animals live on each other. The large fish devours the small fish, a hawk attacks a sparrow. Notice how this opening is narrowing down. Life is like a vast jungle. Unfortunately, our most dangerous enemies are the smallest living things; yet fortunately, for we cannot see them. If we could see or be aware of the germs which surround us, live on our persons and even breed within us, we would be appalled at the dangers threatening us.

Here is the subject introduced, and various lines for developing it are obvious enough already. This General Opening demands careful handling and, during preparation, recollected thought, but the work is well worth while, for there is always something dramatic about it which appeals to listeners. The narrowing-down process catches and holds attention, which is the purpose of your introduction.

{ The Descriptive or Narrative Introduction, which can run to excessive length, also has this quality of gaining speedy attention. It can also be highly dramatic, if the subject lends itself to drama—*e.g.*, an address on Revolution might open by a description of the famous overwhelming of Pompeii by the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius. If you use this kind of descriptive opening, where you paint a scene, be careful to see that the incident you describe naturally draws your subject into mind. Do not give a graphic description and then forge a clumsy link with your subject by saying, "This reminds us of the

danger of any violent eruption, such as a revolution in a peaceful community ”.

A neat way of using this opening is to announce your subject incidentally. For instance, you might ask a short series of questions.

“ Who is the greatest singer the world has known? Was he Caruso, with his powerful throat and high art? Or should the claim be allowed to Lauritz Melchior, the giant of the New York Metropolitan Opera, the personification of a Wagnerian hero? Or do you think better claim might be made by the Russian giant of opera and the concert platform, Chaliapin? ”

Here you have introduced your subject by describing its range. A third way of using the Narrative or Descriptive opening is by reference to historical events. These must be connected with the subject. In the example given below, John Bright’s subject was Free Trade, and he linked it with the advantages which his introduction mentions.

“ Within the last fifty years trade has done much for the people of England. Our population has greatly increased; our villages have become towns and our small towns large cities. The contemned class of manufacturers and traders has assumed another and a very different position, and the great proprietors of the soil now find that there are other men and other interests to be consulted in this kingdom besides those of whom they have taken such great care through the legislation which they have



controlled. In the varying fortunes of this contest we have already seen one feeble and attenuated administration overthrown, and now we see another, which every man thought powerful and robust, prostrate in the dust. It is worth while that the people, and that statesmen, should regard this result, and learn from it a lesson. What was it that brought the Whig Government down in 1841, and what is it that has brought down Sir Robert Peel now? Have we not good grounds for asserting that the Corn-law makes it impossible for any party longer to govern England during its continuance? No statesman dare now take office upon the understanding that he is to maintain the system which the Protectionists have asserted to be a fundamental principle in the constitution of the kingdom."

The adaptability of the Descriptive or Narrative opening has been shown by these examples, and its use should be quite clear.

Previous references have been made to the usefulness of establishing unity between your audience and yourself. Now we can look at the Introduction of Unity. We have already seen in Chapter VII how to find points held in common by you both and how to work on them to make a platform common to all parties. In addition, you may take some fact not at all connected with your subject and introduce yourself to the audience by means of it. You might appear before an entirely male audience; perhaps,

*This is the great masterpiece about Sir Robert Peel who has not to speech*

on another occasion, heavy rain has made attendance at the meeting difficult; another speech may be given to an audience of people below thirty years of age. If you think about your audience, you will usually find one fact which gives a superficial unity, and this you can handle so as to establish yourself.

A combination of this introduction with the humorous opening is sometimes pleasing. Light humour, especially if it reveals a view of the point of unity which is surprising or unusual, will make a good impression.

“While you are looking at me and kindly offering your attention to what I am about to say, I am looking at you. I see rather elderly gentlemen, whose thoughtfulness warns me that what I have to say must be reasonably wise, and young ladies whose brightness warns me that wisdom must be up-to-date. Some of their mothers are amongst you, perhaps hoping that I am going to put some sense into their daughters’ heads, and that makes me wonder how much is in my own head. I can see friends and sweethearts amongst you, probably thinking more of each other than of me, and I wonder how I am going to interest them and hold their attention. If you could see yourselves as I can see you, you would realise why I am perplexed to know how to speak about Foreign Policy to so many different people, with their varying opinions and outlook,



their different motives for coming to this meeting, and their numerous preoccupations of the moment. The only fact which seems to be universal among you is that you are all uncomfortably damp, because of the evening's heavy rain, which could choose no other time for visiting us than the half-hour before the time fixed for our meeting. And in this depressing fact, I find the only comfort which relieves my doubt as to how I am to interest you all equally in an entirely political subject. It gives me comfort, for it shows me that you all, ladies and gentleman, with all your differences of age, habits of thought, occupation and outlook, are equally interested in our Foreign Policy."

There is a satisfactory opening taken from an incidental fact about your audience. As an example of the serious opening of this kind, we may read Benjamin Disraeli's address to the House of Commons on the death of the Prince Consort. Disraeli was known as an ardent supporter of Prince Albert, and he was addressing men who had often opposed and criticised the Prince. The speaker's problem was how he might pay a sincere tribute to the deceased without stirring up past controversies. Both his solution and his method of employing it are extremely skilful.

First he works on the loyalty and regard for the Sovereign which all Members of the House shared with him. Once that is solidly established, he quietly transfers this esteem to the Prince Consort.

The speech is a model of tactful introduction and consequent unity. As you will see in the next chapter, Disraeli closed his speech on the same note of unity.

“No person can be insensible of the fact that the House meets to-night under circumstances very much changed from those which have attended our assembling for many years. Of late, indeed for more than twenty years past, whatever may have been our personal rivalries and our party strifes, there was at least one sentiment in which we all acquiesced, and in which we all shared, and that was a sentiment of admiring gratitude to that throne whose wisdom and goodness so frequently softened the acerbities of our free public life, and so majestically represented the matured intelligence of an enlightened people. All that has changed. He is gone who was the support and comfort of that throne. It has been said that there is nothing which England so much appreciates as the fulfilment of duty. The Prince whom we have lost was not only eminent for the fulfilment of his duty, but it was the fulfilment of the highest duty; and it was the fulfilment of the highest duty under the most difficult circumstances. Prince Albert was the Consort of his Sovereign. He was the father of one who might be his Sovereign. He was the prime councillor of a realm, the political constitution of which did not even recognise his political existence.



Yet, under these circumstances so difficult and so delicate, he elevated even the throne by the dignity and purity of his domestic life."

The orator has by now passed well into the body of his speech, after ably suggesting to his audience that supporters of the Queen are also supporters of him on whom she depended for help in the measures which earned her people's gratitude.

Later in this book it will be declared that it is unwise to refer to a previous speaker in your address. Every rule has its exceptions, and the Introduction by Previous Reference is one of them. You will not use it often, but on the right occasion it is highly commendable. It is necessary to bear in mind that, while you need not approve of what the previous speaker has said, you should not appear to correct his statements. Of course, if you are known to be speaking for the purpose of attacking his views, this principle will not be valid, but that is a rare event. As a rule the previous speaker is only an opportunity for you to please your audience by a graceful reference to his words.

By way of example, suppose that the previous speaker has advocated Total Abstinence and that you are speaking to suggest another point of view, which may not necessarily be completely opposed to what has already been said. You might introduce your speech in this way:—

"I am glad that the speaker, whom we came to listen to to-day, has advised Total Abstinence

on the grounds of the welfare of the community. His appeal will certainly have pleased you, for interest in the welfare of the community is a marked feature of public life here. Anything which can increase the social comfort and security of your fellow-citizens has always won your interest and consideration."

That will gain you the sympathetic attention of your audience as you pass on to announce your subject. You have secured the advantage of shifting the point at issue from Total Temperance to Social Welfare, and can now avoid complete opposition to the previous speaker by suggesting that what you have in mind will serve the community better than what he had proposed.

This gives you an insight into the nature of this type of introduction. You will see that, in itself, it is a comparatively slight affair, for all its usefulness. It needs something to support it—the suggestion of a new point of view, a motive or the consideration of fresh facts. An example of this is the opening of Grattan's speech supporting the motion that England should declare war upon France. The debate was as to whether there should be peace or war. Grattan, following a speaker who had advocated war, made reference to his address and supported it by a new point of view—that the question was not war or peace, but how soon an inevitable war should be fought. This was his subject, and he opened it by reference to the proposal for war. You will always find that this method must be



followed. Do not take something from a speaker's remarks and fasten your speech on to it. Take your speech and, by way of opening, knit on to it something suitable from what has already been said. A moment's thought will show you the difference between the two methods, the right and the wrong ways of opening the speech. If you follow the first way, you either repeat what your predecessor has said, which is a waste of time, or you make a bad opening by merely adding it on to what you are going to say.

“ Sir, I sincerely sympathise with the honourable gentleman who spoke last in his anxiety on this important question; and my solicitude is increased by a knowledge that I differ in opinion from my oldest political friends. I have further to contend against the additional weight given to the arguments of the noble lord who moved the amendment, by the purity of his mind, the soundness of his judgment, and the elevation of his rank. I agree with my honourable friends in thinking that we ought not to impose a government on France. I agree with them in deprecating the evil of war; but I deprecate still more the evils of a peace without securities, and a war without allies. Sir, I wish it was a question between peace and war; but unfortunately for the country, very painfully to us, and most injuriously to all ranks of men, peace is not in our option; and the real question is, whether we shall go

to war when our allies are assembled, or fight the battle when those allies shall be dissipated? ”

Here are all the usual methods of opening a speech, When you have a fairly considerable experience in public speaking, especially if you choose to speak extemporaneously, you will be able to seize some incident of the moment to use as a means of reaching your audience. You will enjoy considerable freedom in using more than one of the usual methods at one time. But until you have experience and the confidence it brings, do not try anything unusual. The methods here outlined will serve all your needs, and experiments may bring disaster.



## CHAPTER XI

### HOW TO CLOSE A SPEECH

“AND that is all I have to say. Thank you very much for your attention.” This sentence is the hall-mark, not of the amateur speaker, but of the untrained speaker, who does not know what a Conclusion should be.

The first fact to know about a Conclusion is that it is a part of the speech. Like a dog's tail, it is not just something to finish the dog with, but something which has an indispensable use and purpose. Your closing remarks should aim at improving any favourable impression your address has made and at lessening any unfavourable impression. This is its whole purpose. By it you make yet smoother the path to that object which is the Particular Purpose of the speech, and you remove any barriers which may still lie across that path. Now let us see how many means are at your disposal in making an effective Conclusion.

(a) *Quotation.* Your Source Book should have plenty of quotations from which you can draw brief, telling quotations for closing an address. A business man might quote an economic axiom or some important recent pronouncement; a lady opening a charity bazaar might quote words used by royalty on a similar occasion. Or your quota-

tion may be a striking piece of prose or poetry which summarises your viewpoint or calls up in your audience the emotion you wish. For instance, when Winston S. Churchill, at the darkest period of the last World War, broadcast the speech which announced the forthcoming aid of America, he concluded his excellent speech with a stanza already well known:—

“ And not by eastern windows only,  
When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly;  
But westward, look, the land is bright! ”

Hope, eagerness to continue the battle against superior odds, even gaiety, were evoked by that quotation, and the nation which was facing nightly bombardment, threat of invasion, retreats on all fronts, was braced to even greater resolution in the conflict. This kind of conclusion is brief, highly effective, and gives a quality of dignity and certainty to what you have previously said. Except among preachers, who often close by repeating their opening text, it is too little used.

(b) *Anecdote or Illustration.* What has already been written about anecdotes may have given the impression that they are to be sparingly used. This is because I have a wholesome fear of the misuse of stories, especially humorous stories. At the same time, I use many stories and illustrations in all my own addresses, and if you have paid sufficient attention to what has been taught earlier in this book about their right use, you need not be afraid of employing them in the conclusion of a speech. Remember



that the anecdote must be woven into the speech and must show its moral or point clearly. As an illustration, read this conclusion to a speech once made by a man who believed that people can be too highly educated for their happiness or success in life.

He had given his reasons for believing that, with no more than a little education, men can succeed because of qualities inherent in them, such as courage and resourcefulness, which education cannot improve.

“Years ago, a lad was taken from school and sent to work so that his younger brothers and sisters might be properly fed. The boy could do some simple arithmetic, spell and write badly, and say where four or five of the chief cities of England lay. Beyond that, he knew almost nothing.

“When he was sixteen, a friend read to him an advertisement from the local paper, requesting applications from those who might wish to become toilet-room attendants in various municipal buildings. The boy applied for a job. His interviewer liked him, but, finding that he could not read or write well enough to send in the required letter of application, regretfully advised him to give up the idea of securing work in that way.

“On his way home, the boy decided to do something for himself. He had a few shillings, and he spent them at a wholesale fruit ware-

house. When he had sold his fruit, he invested the proceeds in a further purchase. Within a few weeks his honest business methods and his cheery disposition had gained him enough customers to justify his hiring a cart, so that he could form a regular sales round. After two years he happened to mention to his friend that he had several hundred pounds saved.

“ ‘Where do you keep it?’ ”

“ ‘At home, in a drawer.’ ”

“ His friend suggested a banking account, pointing out its advantages. He explained how an account may be opened and took the young man to interview a bank manager. This man was greatly interested in the history he was told, and gave the young man a form to fill in preparatory to opening an account. To his surprise, his client asked him to read the contents of the form for him, frankly stating that he could read and write only with difficulty.

“ ‘What a shame!’ said the bank manager. ‘Just think what you might have become by now, with your initiative and resourcefulness, if only you could read and write well!’ ”

“ The young man smiled.

“ ‘If I could read and write,’ he said, ‘I should have been very satisfied with myself as a toilet-room attendant. It might have been years before I thought of doing anything for myself.’ ”

Now, that story teaches its own lesson. It was a perfect conclusion to the speech which aimed at con-



vincing people that education is not always the best help towards success. Take your story, or illustration, as a conclusion if you wish. But do remember what was taught in Chapter III about its proper use.

I remember once hearing a speaker close his address with a few sentences which might be classified both as Quotation from Authority and as Concluding Anecdote. The speaker's Conclusion, as accurately as I remember it, was as follows:—

“My point is that we must not look for novelties in seeking a solution of the world's ills. We must look to the old truths of Christianity, which fulfil all our needs, and not seek new revelations or listen to new prophets. Our attitude should be that suggested by Voltaire when a fashionable young man, worried by the decadence of his age, asked the philosopher whether religious principles should not be devised in harmony with the needs of the modern age. ‘You can start a new religion, if you wish,’ said the old sage. ‘But if it is to have any authority, you must prove your right to teach it by making your message known, then by being crucified for it. After that,’ he added with a smile, ‘you must rise from the dead.’ ”

It would be wrong to add anything to a Conclusion as perfect as that.

(c) *Summary of Main Points.* This is not really a Conclusion, although some opinions suggest that it

is. In fact it is no more a Conclusion—*i.e.*, a series of statements made to assure the achievement of your Particular Purpose, than a list of stations is a summary of a railway system. Nevertheless, it can be formed as a Conclusion if the points are stated in a certain way.

Thus it is evident that a statement of facts, in terse and striking phrases, can rouse response in an audience. This fact makes it a kind of Conclusion, since it is not a mere summary, but an appeal to intellect, sense of duty, emotion or instinct under the guise of a summary. In this way you might close a short appeal for a war hospital in this way:—

“Four million men were killed in the war. Their wives and children are still among us. Three million men were badly wounded. Many of them cannot reach recovery until new hospital equipment is provided. You are safe, free to live your lives and fulfil your plans, happy to have your own homes. Only these people must wait until life is shaped again for them. That is your position and theirs to-day.”

The facts are told strikingly, by the use of brief statement, and by the use of contrast they deliver their own message. In this way, then, you can make a good Conclusion by a statement of fact. Provided you realise that statement of points already made is not in itself sufficient, you can end your address very effectively by this method.

(*d*) *Summary of Principles.* This method more readily lends itself to the purposes of a genuine Con-



clusion, because there is less danger of your failing to rouse response in the audience. You do not recapitulate your facts, but the principles underlying them, which you may or may not have already emphasised. By way of example, suppose that you are supporting a candidate's bid for election to Parliament. You point out to the audience that he represents a political party which is pledged to safeguard the money of small savers, to further educational advancement, to increase steady and wisely distributed employment (especially affecting two local industries), and to increase Old Age Pension allowances. At the same time, the candidate cannot support proposals for certain tax reductions.

You then put a background to these ideas by referring to the Party's record for reform and social welfare, as shown by its history and by its present programme. You conclude:—

“ Since these are the fruits of justice and impartial rule, free from axe-grinding and personal interests, the form of government which bore them must again be given power. As our contribution towards building that form of government, we must return its candidate, pledged to its programme and asked for by it. We must cast our vote for the man who stands before us to-night, as a sign that we desire this form of government whose reforms we now enjoy and whose future measures, for the benefit of the community and of the individual alike, we look forward to with hope and confidence.”

This form of conclusion is halfway between an appeal to the intellect and to the emotions. It is sober and solid, but stirring as well.

Another example may be found in the Conclusion of Lincoln's second Inaugural Address, a speech which may be considered to be the finest speech made by this great orator. The last sentence alone, which is world famous, ends perfectly the statesman's appeal for peace. It outlines the principles, the outlook and purpose, by which alone peace can be maintained.

“With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.”

Notice the development in that sentence, how it passes from fact to principle, from the particular to the general. And admit that, without any direct appeal to emotion and sense of duty, it stirs you and makes you feel a better man by the mere perception of such a noble outlook. That is a fine example of the art of oratory, whether we consider its sincerity, its truth, its language or its method.

(e) *Complimentary*. It is a good thing to leave your listeners feeling pleased with themselves, if you can do so sincerely. That is to say, a sincere compliment makes a good ending; flattery is not only



wrong, but useless, since it is certainly detected. If you can give your listeners a pat on the back, do so. It may just tip the balance in your favour. It is inadvisable to try to do this by thanking your listeners for their attention, for if your address has been all that it should be, this itself will have been their reward. Apart from that, you may use any opportunity for making them content. When he returned to England after signing the Treaty of Berlin, Disraeli was at the height of his popularity. His passage through the City to the Foreign Office was attended by excited crowds, to whom he uttered the celebrated sentence, "I have brought you peace, but I trust, peace with honour".

Nevertheless, he knew that attacks were to be made upon himself and his fellow plenipotentiary for the signing of the Treaty, and he developed the idea behind that sentence in an address which he delivered in the Carlton Club. Explaining that the attacks were based on a misunderstanding of his policy during the Berlin Congress, he desired to conclude his speech without opening the conflict which he anticipated. He knew that his explanation of the Treaty would assuredly calm his opponents and turn their fears into approval of what he had done. Therefore he ended this speech by a graceful and pleasing reference to the welcome he had received from the people of London, which he said was characteristic of the English political outlook. He aroused no opposition; he avoided the beginning of discussion; he made his hearers pleased with themselves.

“My Lords and Gentlemen, let me thank you once more for the manner in which you have welcomed me to-day. These are the rewards of public life that never pall—the sympathy of those who have known you long, who have worked with you long, who have the same opinions on the policy that ought to be pursued in this great and ancient Empire. These are sentiments which no language can sufficiently appreciate—which are a consolation under all circumstances and the highest reward that a public man can attain. The generous feeling that has prompted you to welcome my colleague and myself on our return to England will inspire and strengthen our efforts to serve our country; and it is not merely that in this welcome you encourage those who are doing their best for what they conceive to be the public interests, but to tell to Europe also that England is a grateful country, and knows how to appreciate the efforts of her public servants, who are resolved to maintain to their utmost the Empire of Great Britain.”

You will see in this Conclusion the suggestion that Englishmen are fair-minded, that they applaud honest effort for the common good even when they suspect that it is misdirected. There is also the hint that the speaker and his opponents are united by the bond of patriotism and pride of empire. There can be no reason for wonder that the address was well received.



The same method of complimenting an audience can be used as successfully in the parish hall as in the Carlton Club. Do not hesitate to use it, always provided that you are sincere.

(f) *Appeal to Emotion.* This kind of Conclusion needs no explanation, but a word of warning is necessary to prevent our emotion from running away with us. If it does, it will displease the audience. The Conclusion should be delivered slowly, and be speeded up as the last sentence is approached. Robert Emmet's speech from the dock in 1803 provides an example of appeal to patriotic emotion. Unfortunately the excisions made by his enemies and the emendations of friends have resulted in nearly twenty versions of this masterpiece of oratory, but the following text may be taken as accurate. The speech was delivered late at night, in Green Street Court House, Dublin, after the Clerk had asked Emmet whether he had anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon him. The Conclusion is interesting in itself and as an appeal addressed to a public not present in the Court, a public which receives it with interest even to-day:—

“My lord, you are impatient for the sacrifice. The blood which you seek is not congealed by the artificial terrors which usually surround your victim; it circulates warmly and unruffled through its channels and in a little time it will go to heaven. Be patient. I have but a few more words to say—my ministry is now

ended. I am going to my cold and silent grave. I have burnt out my lamp of life. I have parted with everything that was dear to me in this life for my country's cause; I have abandoned another idol that I adored in my heart. My race is run, the grave opens to receive me, and I sink into its bosom. I have not been allowed to vindicate my character. I have but one request to ask at my departure from this world, it is the charity of its silence. Let there be no inscription on my tomb. Let no man write my epitaph. No man can write my epitaph, for as no man who knows my motives and character dares now to vindicate them, let not prejudice or ignorance asperse them. Let them rest in obscurity and peace until other times and other men can do justice to them. When my country takes her place among the nations of the earth, then shall my character be vindicated, then may my epitaph be written. I have done."

(g) *Appeal for Action.* This is the obviously suitable conclusion to a speech where the Particular Purpose is to secure a vote or expression of opinion. It seems to be used too often, especially by amateur speakers who feel that action must be the result of a speech. For instance, I have heard a man speaking about certain principles of art end his address by an appeal for a wider interest in painting, whereas the Particular Purpose of his speech was to secure a better understanding of the purposes of painting.



This Conclusion was certainly a defect, since it was not in keeping with his Particular Purpose. If the speech aims at action, however, the Conclusion is highly suitable, and needs no explanation.

We may take two examples of it, one based on what we may call the noble dictates of conscience, and the other on objective and practical considerations. First, the close of Lord Brougham's appeal in the House of Lords, in 1838, for the emancipation of negro slaves.

“ So now the fulness of time is come for the discharging of our duty to the African captive. . . . The time has come, the trial has been made, the hour is striking; you have no longer a pretext for hesitation, or faltering, or delay. The slave has shown, by four years' blameless behaviour and devotion to the pursuits of peaceful industry, that he is as fit for his freedom as any English peasant, aye, or any Lord whom I now address. I demand his rights; I demand his liberty without stint. In the name of justice and of law, in the name of reason, in the name of God, who has given you no right to work injustice, I demand that your brother be no longer trampled upon as your slave! I make my appeal to the Commons, who represent the free people of England, and I require at their hands the performance of that condition for which they paid so enormous a price—that condition which all their constituents are in breathless anxiety to see fulfilled!

I appeal to this House! Hereditary judges of the first tribunal in the world, to you I appeal for justice! Patrons of all the arts that humanise mankind, under your protection I place humanity itself! To the merciful Sovereign of a free people, I call aloud for mercy to the hundreds of thousands for whom half a million of her Christian sisters have cried out; I ask that their cry may not have risen in vain. But, first, I turn my eye to the Throne of all justice, and devoutly humbling myself before Him who is of purer eyes than to behold such vast iniquities, I implore that the curse hovering over the head of the unjust and the oppressor be averted from us, that your hearts may be turned to mercy, and that over all the earth His will may at length be done!"

This Conclusion provides you with an interesting exercise. Recalling the psychological motives of appeal of which you have read earlier in this book, make a list of the motives which Lord Brougham wove together in the last sentences of his speech. It is an interesting study of the means by which a real orator plays upon the emotions and beliefs of his audience in order to call for action. He is not calling for agreement, but for decisive action. Notice how indirectly he does it, yet how direct his methods actually are.

By way of contrast, we may read the Conclusion of Disraeli's appeal for the emancipation of the Jews, delivered in the House of Commons, in 1848.



His method was to appeal to the practical benefits which the emancipators will gain; he ignores the benefits which will be received by the Jews:—

“In the same measure in which we have relaxed the laws against the Jews, that patriot instinct by which we are taught to love the land of our birth has been revived. British feeling has already taken root in the heart of the Jew, and for its perfect development nothing but perfect justice is required. To the fallacies of fanaticism give no heed. Emancipate the Jew—from the Statute-book of England be the last remnant of intolerance erased for ever; abolish all civil discrimination between the Christian and the Jew, fill his whole heart with the consciousness of country. Do this, and we dare be sworn that he will feel, and think, and fear, and hope as you do; his sorrow and his exultation will be the same; at the tidings of English glory his heart will beat with a kindred palpitation, and whenever there shall be need, in the defence of his Sovereign and his country, his best blood, at your bidding, will be poured out with the same heroic prodigality as your own.”

Ten years were to elapse before the disabilities against which Lord Beaconsfield appealed were fully removed, but the motives here suggested by the statesman drew a great response from those to whom he suggested them.

(h) *Dramatic or Descriptive Climax.* This form of

Conclusion is not easy to work up, and it is not suited to every speaker. Its aim is to work up to a climax of interest, to draw the audience's thoughts and imaginations after it to one thought, which is the Particular Purpose of the whole address.

In these pages I have occasionally illustrated a point by quotation from one of my own addresses. This is not because an example might not be found in the speeches of famous orators, but to show you that much lesser speakers might also accomplish satisfactorily the aims which they reached and touched with genius. Again I am going to use an illustration of my own to explain the Dramatic or Descriptive Conclusion. Once I was asked to speak to a small gathering of professional and amateur astronomers. Although I had the advantage of a training in their science, I felt that it would be presumptuous to speak to them from a strictly scientific angle. Consequently, I chose to speak on the final end of all study and knowledge—the admission and reverence of the One who is the beginning of knowledge. This is the end of the address, written exactly as it was delivered:—

“ This moon was old when the human race was young. It shone over the garden of Eden; Adam and Eve in their first innocence looked up at its face. It illuminated the nightly travels of the dispersed races of the earth. It witnessed the rise and fall of Empires, of Babylon, of Egypt, of Greece and of Rome. It cast the shadows of the red man, the black man and the



yellow man when the white man knew of no races save his own. By its phases men have judged the time propitious for the gathering of herbs and the sowing of seed; they have launched their ships at its rising and feared its wane as the time of epidemic and disaster. From those people for whom it was the only light by night to us whose lamps and flood-lights have almost banished its rays from our cities, it has shone on generation after generation of mankind. Oblivious to the growth and decay of human knowledge it has shed its unvarying light; empires have slowly grown and have crashed in blood and dust as it travelled its cycle with even tranquillity; even as it rises over us to-night, we grow older while thousands of children are for the first time gazing on it with delight and wonder as we also did in infancy. It will still cast its silver beams on sea and land and the children of men when we in turn can see it no longer, and we may repeat the words of the Persian eight hundred years ago,

‘ Ah, moon of my delight, that knows no wane,  
The moon of Heav’n is rising once again :  
How oft hereafter rising shall she look  
Through this same Garden after me—in vain ! ’

And as we realise what it is we examine by the aid of our instruments we realise that we are but pigmies of a day’s life, mere men who must bow before Him who made the moon and keeps it nightly in its course. This, gentlemen, is

the real end of science, the only final purpose of knowledge, to pay tribute to Him and repeat the ancient words, ' I will behold thy heavens, the works of thy fingers: the moon and the stars which thou hast founded. O Lord our Lord, how admirable is thy name in all the earth '."

Now, to end with a few " dont's ". Do not become attached to " the lettuce ending ", so called because it always begins, " And so let us . . . " Never use it, at least in that bare, ugly form.

Do not introduce new facts or figures in the Conclusion. There are rare exceptions to this rule, but in almost every address all the facts and figures should have been mentioned before the Conclusion is reached.

Do not make a long Conclusion. It will kill the speech.

Do not make the Conclusion in any way an anti-climax. For instance, avoid the fault of making the Conclusion an opportunity for adding some unimportant details for the sake of completeness. This is the sort of thing to avoid (but it is spoken often enough!) :—

" In speaking of the dangers of fire, let me remind you once again of the disaster I have already described. I might mention, by the way, just for the sake of completion, that besides the destruction of £40,000 worth of rubber and £100,000 worth of timber, and the loss of eighteen lives, this fire also resulted in the loss of a case of apples and the shock of two women



who fainted. So let me again urge you to do all you can to take precautions against starting a fire, the consequences of which can never be foreseen."

There is no need to point out the fault in that Conclusion, apart from the "lettuce ending" which might easily have been avoided.

Do not introduce the Conclusion by such phrases as *Might I just add*, *One last word*, *It only remains for me to say*, *I want to repeat again*, and their evil companions. If a thing is to be said, say it, but do not draw it in by these shabby leading-strings.

## CHAPTER XII

### EXTEMPORE SPEAKING

BEFORE passing from speech preparation to speech delivery, it is essential that we should consider the question of extempore speaking. In this matter you will have to choose your own method, because no one can lay down a hard-and-fast rule that all speeches should be written and memorised, or that they should be delivered according to verbal inspiration of the moment.

Should you write your speeches in full and commit them to memory for delivery? Should you omit written preparation and leave the finding of words and phrases to the suggestion of the moment of delivery? Or should you find a middle way, of address partly memorised and partly extempore?

If you are a beginner in the art of public speaking, your inclination will probably be for a fully written and memorised speech. Yet much may be said on behalf of each of the three methods of preparation and delivery, and you must know all three cases fully before you make your decision.

The advocates of the fully written speech urge:—

(a) That the writing of speeches is an invaluable discipline. As Lord Bacon noted, “Reading maketh a full man, writing an exact man”. That which is written can be thoroughly revised before delivery. Its grammar can be corrected, phrases which at first



writing seemed clear can now be made clearer and more pointed. All verbal slovenliness can be removed. And it is certainly important to remember that an audience immediately notices the carefulness which shows through a well-prepared speech. It is complimented by this care, and is favourably disposed towards the speaker who has shown this form of consideration towards his listeners.

(b) That the written speech relieves the speaker of much anxiety, especially if he is unused to public speaking. With a carefully written address in his mind, he need not face his audience conscious of Othello's words, "Rude am I in my speech".

(c) That there are occasions—*e.g.*, in a declaration of policy, a professional and authoritative statement, or any occasion of notable importance—when the address must be word perfect. This accuracy is impossible of attainment without memorisation, except for those speakers whom great natural gifts and long practice have perfected. When what is said is unalterable, the address must be fully written out during its preparation.

(d) That the most important benefit of a written speech is its rehearsal. The speaker can go over it again and again, speaking it as often as he wishes. He can practise his timing, gestures, intonation, alone or before a friend. He can amend both the text and the delivery for days before the address is due for public delivery.

These reasons undoubtedly carry great weight, and must be fully considered. At the same time, we must not close our eyes to the opinion of qualified

judges who maintain that these advantages can all be attained without the full writing out of the text. These orators rely, as a rule, on entirely extempore delivery, which is by no means as difficult as you may imagine if you have not practised it. They claim that their method gives them these advantages over other speakers:—

(a) A memorised speech fixes in the minds of all except the most practised speakers a fear that a word or phrase may be forgotten, that a breakdown may occur which will bring them an embarrassing pause, if it does not even halt them entirely. Some link between thoughts may disappear because a paragraph disappears from memory. The consciousness of this possibility is sufficient to prevent a speaker from “throwing himself on his audience”. During delivery many distractions occur, such as the movements, coughing and glances of members of the audience. Any of them may cause the gap in the speaker’s memory which means a temporary or complete breakdown. Moreover, even if mere hesitation occurs, it causes uneasiness among the listeners, and removes them from the complete influence of the speaker. We have all endured the tense experience of watching a speaker who was groping for his next word or searching for the idea which had slipped from memory. It is claimed that the extempore speaker faces no such dangers nor embarrasses his audience by these awkward moments.

(b) The speaker’s concentration on a memorised speech often results in a rigidity of manner which is displeasing to listeners and is a barrier between him



and them. It also causes a monotony of inflexion in delivery. Under these circumstances real oratory is impossible; the audience may as well listen to a recording of the speaker's remarks, for his presence adds little to them.

(c) By way of contrast, extempore speech enables you to change your prepared address in the course of delivery. The ability to do this is noticeable, after a few practice speeches, even in beginners in the art of public speaking. Perhaps you notice some sign of assent or dissent among the audience while you are speaking. Perhaps you see some bewilderment or uneasiness. At once you can insert a few sentences, or even expand what you have said by a new idea, to use what you have noticed to the advantage of your Particular Purpose. You can explain your meaning, introduce another illustration, or concentrate on a point which has obviously commended itself to your listeners. Any disagreement or agreement which you had not foreseen during your time of preparation can be dealt with immediately. Such adaptability is impossible for the speaker who is tied either to a manuscript or to a memorised address. Furthermore, in extempore speaking you can shorten or lengthen your speech, as the needs of the occasion suggest. The eminent preacher, the Rev. Charles Spurgeon, saw no difference between the reading of an address and its delivery from a memorised script. He held extempore speech to be so important that he said, "If I cannot speak extemporaneously, I shall hold my tongue. To read I am ashamed."

(d) Closely allied to the last point is the fact that something in your surroundings as you speak may suggest a thought or illustration which you can use effectively to promote your purpose. Perhaps it will be someone's entry, the opening of a window, the sound of a storm outside the hall, a remark overheard by you, which will give you the sudden inspiration to bring into your remarks something which had not even entered your mind during the time of preparation. It must not be forgotten that, quite apart from the intrinsic value of what you can say under such an inspiration, the fact that you are capable of seizing a passing event and turning it to good use has a great effect on your listeners, who always admire both the skill and the courage which the effort exhibits. The audience's sporting instinct is roused, and it feels a liveliness in your address which it appreciates. This in itself helps to dispose the audience in your favour, and every speaker will naturally wish to use every possible inclination which an audience may show towards him. (A suddenly conceived epigram, a witty remark, a telling phrase which is the thought of the moment delights an audience and makes you welcome to its attention.)

In case you may imagine that the seizing of such an opportunity is possible only to the practised and skilled speaker, let me give you an example from the first practice extempore speech made by a student. He was very nervous about it, and had little belief that he would get through to the end of the short five minutes appointed for him. His



subject was Capitalism, and his main point was that there is no harm in Capitalism so long as the capitalist did not become a slave to money and possessions. The speaker brought St. Paul into his remarks, and proceeded like this:—

“St. Paul was a short man. He was quite small in stature, by no means a tall man. His appearance was not at all in his favour, because he was so short. He was . . . er . . .”

It was clear that the speaker had forgotten why St. Paul had come into his speech; he was speaking in the hope that his line of thought would come back to him. Among the audience of students, one pulled out his handkerchief to hide a smile and, in doing so, sent some coins tinkling along the floor.

“What I was going to tell you about St. Paul,” the speaker immediately resumed, “I can omit, and come straight to my point. St. Paul would have done exactly what our friend has done—he would have scattered his surplus money liberally.”

A roar of laughter greeted this excellent grasping of a chance opportunity to make a point. Was the speech good? No. It was halting and nervous. But it was voted the best of the evening and, had it been given professionally before any audience, that one effort would certainly have been well rewarded by the increased friendliness of those who heard it. This advantage of extempore speech, then, is not

within the grasp only of the tried professional speaker. It is for everyone to use as often as chance and courage make it possible.

(e) The readiness of speech which extemporisation permits is clearly an advantage because during a debate or meeting some emergency may appear, a remark may be made by another speaker which calls for a reply, an unexpected invitation to speak may occur, or some other incident arise which, with two minutes' thought, the extempore speaker can handle successfully. He can concentrate on thought, without worry as to how he may express his thoughts, since the habit of extemporisation has well fitted him for effective expression. It is the opportunity

“When thought is speech, and speech is truth.”

(Scott: *Marmion*, Intro. to Canto ii.)

(f) Finally, supporters of the wholly extempore method of speech point out that it leaves the speaker free to respond to any inspiration which may come from within himself during the course of his address. This does not refer to what has been considered under section (d), but to a new emotion which comes over the speaker as his prepared thoughts pass again through his mind. The presence of an audience or of individuals among it may stimulate him so that he feels the truth of his remarks with a force impossible to experience during his solitary hours of preparation. The man who is tied to a memorised speech cannot “let himself go” under this new impulse which comes to him with full power for the first time. He cannot use this refresh-



ing experience as a means of swinging his audience with him into enthusiasm or of throwing this new power upon it with irresistible influence. The power to achieve this success is latent in every extempore speaker. The finest expression of it is contained in the sentence of Henry Ward Beecher, "No man who is tied to written lines can, in an emergency, throw the whole power of his manhood upon his audience".

We have now summarised the chief arguments in favour of the speech which is both written and memorised and the speech which is prepared in thought but not in word. Before we try to reach a practical conclusion (which each speaker must arrive at for himself), we must consider two objections which are rightly raised against the extempore method of speech delivery.

The first is that extemporisation necessarily means that the address will be less polished than that which has been prepared to the last word. It may be doubted, for instance, whether Lincoln's famous address at Gettysburg could have been delivered, in its entirety, by the extempore method. That speech of ten sentences was thought over for days, written two or three times (as Lincoln declared), and prepared with the utmost care of a written speech.

The reply made to such an example is that it does not prove that excellent speeches can be prepared by one method only. It can justly be said that many good speeches are spoiled by over-preparation, which gives them a cold formality displeasing to audiences. Yet the objection is a fair

one, and we must admit that, on occasion, the fully written and memorised address is essential.

The second objection to extemporisation is that it leads to carelessness of expression and bad grammar. Unless the speaker is experienced and unusually gifted, the surge of inspiration within him, to which extemporisation allows freedom, may result in errors of expression. Yet can we say that he is "guilty" of faulty English? It is probable that the influence which he is wielding over his audience will be evoking in it such a powerful reaction that small lapses will be unnoticed. The speaker's sincerity and zeal matter more than his actual words. We must remember that the purpose of public speaking is not nicety of phrase, but the persuasion of the audience. In that it differs considerably from the art of writing. A speaker can afford to ignore an occasional sentence which is incomplete, an occasional confusion between "shall" and "will", if he has his audience moving rapidly towards the goal he has set. The realisation that small mistakes which may occur during the heat and vigour of declaration are insignificant in their effect led to the famous remark, "When the English language gets in my way, it doesn't stand a chance!"

Thus we arrive at the point where we can fairly weigh up the merits of fully prepared and extempore methods of public speaking. Our first conclusion necessarily is that occasions demand memorised or extempore speeches according to circumstances. We must further believe that the writing and memorising of speeches is an invaluable discipline which



every speaker, even though he is a practised speaker, requires. The writing of a speech revises methods of planning. It also helps the speaker to refresh his knowledge of the technique of his art, and also to avoid the grave danger to which he will always be open—the danger of too great length. Brevity is perhaps the greatest asset of the speaker who writes and memorises his addresses; tedious length is the pit into which extempore speakers fall, especially when they are well accustomed to public speaking.

It is reasonable to conclude also, in the light of experience, that the extempore speech must find its place in the training of every speaker. Those who avoid it rarely acquire ease of presence and fluency of address. This is so marked that I have seen good speakers lose heart when, as years passed, they compared their verbally prepared speeches with those of their companions who have perfected themselves in extemporisation. Some of them have descended to taking written scripts with them on to the platform, and have even read their speeches. This is as ineffective as handing out leaflets. There is nothing of the speech or the speaker left when this low level has been reached.

Another danger which experience shows to lie before the speaker who always uses the memorised address is that, as he grows older, he increasingly shirks the drudgery of writing out what he has to say. He falls into the habit of rummaging among his old manuscripts for something similar to what he now has to say and of adapting it for immediate use. The careers and success of these speakers are

buried under a pile of thumb-ed papers. They are still among us, the victims of a system in many ways useful, but fatal if adopted as an unvarying procedure. They are the aversion of all judges of a good speech, and presently settle into the ranks of the mediocre and uninvited.

The only practical conclusion which can be drawn from the truths we have considered is that each speaker should use a combination of both methods. Beginners in the art of public speaking should write out all their speeches and commit them to memory. By this custom they acquire facility in speech-planning; they become familiar with the proper use of words; they strengthen their memories. Moreover, they ease themselves of some of the nervous tension inevitable when facing an audience. This last advantage is, of course, only a passing phase of their development, for soon they will feel confident when they face their audiences.

When they feel ease in the delivery of memorised speeches, they should turn to the resolute practice of extempore speaking. The subject should be decided and planned, but the address should be delivered without previous thought of words or phrases. For the sake of practice, although never before an audience, they should begin to speak on a subject within two minutes of choosing it. If a friend will help, by suggesting the subject and acting as audience, so much the better. This is invaluable practice in word-finding and in thinking while on one's feet.

Sometimes, of course, a breakdown will occur. It



is of the utmost insignificance. It is inevitable, and should never discourage a beginner. As an example of the importance of this form of practice, let me quote the fact that, every week for four years, two friends and I met for this purpose. We got a lot of good fun out of it, and did not mind making fools of ourselves. My first public address was fully written and memorised; I still have it by me and, on suitable occasions, use it still with success. But even when my written speeches were winning prizes, my main interest and effort were directed towards successful extempore speaking. As a result, for a number of years now I have delivered most of my speeches without any verbal preparation (with the exception noted in the next paragraph) and without the aid of a single note. Thoughts and words depend entirely on thoughts already planned and the inspiration of the moment. You can reach the same degree of easy and confident delivery by using the same method. You need a normal amount of determination, an honest and sustained effort, and an ordinary (not an excellent) memory.

If you decide, as I earnestly recommend, to adopt this method of preparing and delivering your speeches, you will do well to write and memorise a few phrases which occur to you during your preliminary thinking (such phrases as come into your mind and seem striking or, from the audience's point of view, memorable) and your Conclusion. This as well as other parts of your speech will need precise statement; write and revise them, then learn them by heart. The exercise of writing and

reading them will probably impress them on your memory sufficiently without your having to learn them by heart in order to ensure accurate reproduction.

This is the method I use myself. It has grown more successful with every year of use, and has given me complete ease and confidence before audiences. Whatever worries or distractions may be in my mind when I am speaking, the fear of breaking down is never present. The method has given freedom to think of the right word while speaking and to alter my address in response to the reactions of the audience. It has given fluency without undue length. The secret of success is frequent practice with the right method.



## CHAPTER XIII

### YOUR VOICE

A BOOK on public speaking which aims at being also a primer of elocution and a manual of voice production exceeds its legitimate scope, which is to teach readers how to speak effectively and persuasively. Nevertheless, it should contain hints on proper care and use of the voice. If any reader finds that these are not sufficient for his needs, he should seek the assistance of a professional elocutionist.

The first point we must realise is that, unlike a musician, the speaker must accept the instrument provided for him by nature. Moreover, if his vocal instrument becomes defective he cannot, as the musician can, change it for another. He must therefore take care of it, and the notes in this chapter are intended to suggest how he may preserve his voice and get the best use out of it. It has been given to us, and we must know how to make the most of it.

The second point we should consider is the nature of our voices. Vocal sound is produced by the vocal chords, but this sound is muzzy and faint, and carries only a short distance. It depends for strength and quality on various cavities or sounding-chambers which increase its volume and give it

resonance. The voice is automatically increased by vibrations in the chest, and also by vibrations in the larynx and nose. Other sounding-chambers, of less importance, also aid the voice, such as the sinus cavities.

The actual cause of vocal sound is the striking of the vocal chords by air, so that breathing is the first cause of speech. We must look to this first and, once we know how to breathe correctly, any defect must be remedied by attention to the sounding-chambers of head and body.

Beginning with inhalation, it may be said that the chief cause of flatness of voice, weakness or want of resonance is shallow breathing. Far too many people breathe into the top one-third of their lungs and forget about the lower two-thirds. They should breathe deeply. That is, not into the top or sides of the chest, but right into the bottom of their lungs.

The reason for this is that the bottom of the lungs is supported by the diaphragm, which we may regard as a floor of tough elastic which divides the trunk of the body into two, stretching from side to side and from front to back. Every time you breathe in, this dome-shaped floor is depressed and presses strongly back against the lungs, forcing you to exhale. Your chest cavity, being compressed by the rising of its floor (to express what happens in the simplest if not entirely accurate terms), forces out air at considerable pressure, acting on the vocal chords as it does so. The deeper your breathing, the more powerful is your exhalation and the more



even is the stream of air which passes your vocal chords. Steady, deep and controlled breathing inevitably results in a powerful voice, richness of tone and a saving of energy in the effort of speaking.

We should, therefore, learn how to breathe correctly. The following exercises will be found to be of considerable help.

Place the palms of your hands on the top of your chest while you inhale deeply. Notice the upwards movement beneath your hands. Now place your hands against your sides and breathe in again. Notice how the sides of your chest are pushed outwards. Keep on breathing in this way, imagining that you are trying to push out the sides of your chest. When you have increased the outward thrust of your sides, you may pass to the final and only correct way of breathing to the bottom of your lungs. That is to say, imagine that you are breathing into your abdomen. Try to keep the top of the chest and its sides as still as you can, and concentrate on letting the air breathed in push the abdomen outwards. Of course, it doesn't enter the abdomen, but when you are breathing really deeply, the depression of the diaphragm will be so great as to compress the organs below it, resulting in an outward thrust of the abdomen. If you like, place the palm of one hand lightly below your ribs and feel this thrust occurring at each slow, deep inhalation.

This exercise should be performed daily. Your

aim should be to acquire the habit of "breathing into the tummy" so that you do it naturally all day and while you sleep. Any other form of breathing is shallow breathing, which is no use to a speaker, since it causes defects of voice and excessive fatigue while speaking.

Another exercise is one we all learned at school—the exercise which expands your "air-box" and enables you to hold a greater quantity of air. Push your shoulders well back, keep the head erect and chin well up. Then breathe in and out evenly and regularly.

This exercise should be practised daily before the exercise outlined above. Now for a second exercise to develop your deep breathing.

Get down on your hands and knees and pant like a dog. I know it sounds rather rude, but that is the best way to describe the exercise. Pant quickly but evenly. You will notice that it is difficult, while on your hands and knees, to breathe into your chest; the exercise more or less forces you to breathe abdominally.

This exercise should also form part of your daily drill. It cannot harm you, but you must stop it at once if you feel a slight dizziness. This is only Nature's signal of tiredness and it must be obeyed.

In order to acquire steadiness of breathing, try this simple exercise.

Relax the throat as much as you can, opening your mouth wide. Breathe in deeply and, hold-



ing a lighted candle in front of your mouth, breathe out slowly. You should take nearly a minute before the breath is exhausted, without blowing out the candle. Repeat this five or six times.

The exercise will give you better breathing control, as well as increase your breathing capacity. It is important not to tighten the throat during the exercise.

You may find, without being fully aware of what is wrong, a certain stiffness of the diaphragm. This will probably make itself felt by a vague discomfort about the middle of the body during deep breathing. If you are aware of this, try this exercise.

Keeping your arms at full stretch, raise them sideways to shoulder level, palms downwards. Then lower them to your sides until your palms press against the sides of your thighs. Now raise and lower your arms regularly and smoothly, breathing out as you raise them and breathing in as you lower them. This helps the diaphragm to lift and lower more easily and comfortably.

The next exercise is useful to speakers who breathe through the mouth. This fault results in two difficulties: a nasal tone of voice and a dryness of mouth and throat. To overcome the tendency to mouth-breathing, as well as to remedy its defects, practise opening the mouth widely and saying "A-ah" while you breathe out slowly. The "A-ah" can sometimes be varied by short breaths.

In this exercise, be on your guard against letting the mouth begin to close while you exhale. Moreover, you should take care that the short breaths are deep breaths. There will be little value in the exercise if they do not reach the bottom of the lungs.

In connection with nasal breathing, a useful tip is that you should always breathe through the nose after leaving a warm hall, especially if you have been speaking. Cold air will chill the vocal chords, causing huskiness next day, or even a loss of voice. By breathing through the nose you ensure that warm, filtered air alone reaches the sensitive vocal chords.

Another hint which speakers who suffer from throat weakness often find useful is regular gargling with salt and water, or with hot vinegar. Both strengthen the throat considerably and make it far less susceptible to the ill effects of cold air, cigarette-smoking, etc. Some speakers wash the surface of their throats and chests every morning with cold water. This also brings protection against colds and huskiness.

The vibration of the vocal chords, amplified by the chest cavity, is by no means the only cause of sound. Muscles and bone play their part in the production of a resonant voice and in tone control. They must be taken into account, and we can note three chief causes of voice defect among amateur speakers.

1. *Closed or Tight Throat.* The voice rising from the throat must have a clear passage so that it can



strike resoundingly against the hard parts of the framework which Nature has provided for it. It must resound against the spinal column of the neck, the arches of the nose, and against the jaw-bones and teeth, not to mention the sounding-chambers of the sinus and other cavities. Unless there is some defect which requires investigation and remedy, the habit of abdominal breathing and of an open throat are sufficient to secure resonance of voice. To make sure that your throat is not closed or tightened by its muscles, allow your voice to rise "into your head". Open your mouth as if you were about to yawn. Immediately breathing out, pronounce open sounds slowly, such as "Go, Aw, Oh, Ah". If you are aware of tightness of the throat, repeat this exercise several times daily.

2. *Stiffness of the Jaw.* For many speakers, voice production is ruined by laziness, for stiffness of the lower jaw is really a form of laziness. They speak with half-closed mouths, so that their voices are deadened, the words are indistinct, and their tone is expressionless. To notice the difference between the lazy and the correct way of speaking, keep your teeth almost together and say, "Oh, possibly". Now open your mouth freely and say it again. Not only is there a difference of expression, but also of quality in the voice. Since stiffness of the lower jaw is caused by laziness, and not by defect, there is no exercise to remedy it. If you feel that it affects you, practise talking, when alone, with your mouth wide open. Utter whole sentences with your mouth as open as far as possible.

3. *Stiffness of the Lips.* This fault is not often due to laziness nor is it connected with stiffness of the jaw. Indeed, many good elocutionists find that their lips are stiff at times, especially early in the day or after a spell without speaking practice.

To remedy the defect, which is entirely muscular and easily put right, purse the lips together and say "Oo". Then widen them into a tight grin, and say "Ee". Say the sounds quite slowly at first, concentrating on the pursing of the lips and the drawing of them tightly towards the ears. As the muscles come flexibly into play, speed up the exercise. Another method of freeing the muscles from stiffness is to close your lips as if your mouth were full of water. Then let your lips literally explode as you pronounce the letter B. After you have done this several times, place the lower lip under the top teeth and make it spring outwards as you pronounce the letter F. Tighten your lips again, as if for the B exercise, but not quite so tightly, and explode them to the letter P. Work on these three letters will soon give your lips flexibility and free muscular control.

Finally, a few hints on how to secure richness and resonance of tone. Assuming that faults already mentioned in this chapter have been corrected, all you have to do is to hum. There is no need to sing, however good your singing voice may be. Humming is the secret of resonance. Hum while



you are bathing and shaving, while you are opening your morning's letters, while you are walking about. There are many times during each day when you can hum without attracting attention or annoying anyone. You can hum your favourite melodies or no melody at all. Do not aim at using a high or low note; simply use the note which is natural to you, the note your voice naturally takes as its proper pitch. Nothing can be simpler than this, can it? And you will find that the resonance of voice which the practice will cause is out of all proportion to the simplicity of the exercise.

Sometimes you can vary the humming by pronouncing sounds like "Me", but always while humming. "Mee—Nee" hummed a dozen times is a good exercise. In doing this, you may usefully hum the sounds at different pitches, especially on higher notes than your ordinary humming note. The "Eeny-meeny-mynee-mo" which you may have chanted as a child is also useful, but now you must hum the sounds, especially fairly high up in your vocal register. However, at the first sign of throat tiredness, stop the exercise, and be content to conclude with ordinary humming.

Speakers who suffer occasional huskiness of throat may be advised to swallow a raw egg in rum. And it is excellent for producing a clear, rich voice. There is a simpler method than that, however. I am a heavy cigarette smoker, and huskiness often threatens when I have a long address to deliver. The remedy is to swallow a couple of pinches of salt half-an-hour or twenty minutes before beginning

the speech. This will not work miracles and, if you have been abusing your throat by excessive speaking, eating nuts or straining your vocal chords, you cannot expect it to do much. But the pinches of salt really do clear the throat surprisingly well, and the tip is well worth knowing.

If you have difficulties in voice production which have not been mentioned in this chapter, you should consult either a professional elocutionist or your doctor.



## CHAPTER XIV

### BEFORE YOUR AUDIENCE

SOME speakers attach great importance to platform presence. By contrast some of the greatest orators had nothing exterior to commend them; the genius of their thought, their personality and the brilliance of their language were sufficient to hold audiences spellbound. We must not imagine that a perfect platform presence is going to make us welcome.

Nevertheless, most of us cannot hope that our natural gifts are great enough to make attention to presence unnecessary, and we will therefore think about a few rules and suggestions which most speakers find helpful. Personal appearance and behaviour are important for us. To say the least of it, we owe our listeners the compliment of a presentable appearance, if only because they give us their silence and attention. Moreover, some rules are necessary to ensure that we shall be heard. For instance, I have seen speakers who do not face their audiences properly, resulting in poor audibility, or who gaze at one part of the hall continually, thus risking loss of attention from the greater number of their listeners. Here are a few ideas, then, which you will find helpful.

To begin with your dress, formal dress is not usually required. In this case, choose something neat and quiet. No one will expect you to be

expensively dressed, but will certainly want your clothes to be pleasant to the eye, if one may express the fact in that way. Probably the reason for this is that neatness of dress shows that you have self-respect. This makes the audience feel that you are a dependable sort of person, and gives it confidence that your mind is as well ordered and normal as your clothes. Be careful that there is nothing about your dress which looks clumsy, such as bulging pockets.

Your posture should also be quiet and comfortable. Probably you will find that you will tire less easily if you stand with your heels together, toes pointing outwards, weight thrown forward so that you balance on the balls of your feet. This enables you to shift your weight, without noticeable movement, from one foot to the other.

What are you to do with your hands, which are the bugbear of most speakers? As soon as you appear on the platform, your hands seem to grow to four times their normal size, grow extra fingers and thumbs and become impossible either to use or to hide. Well, the difficulty is not really as big as that, and you can take it as an invariable rule that leaning forward on a table is not the way to avoid it. It spoils your posture, affects your delivery, looks awkward and is tiring. What are you to do, then?

Some teachers would advise you to speak with your arms hanging by your sides, except when you use gesture. No doubt there are speakers whom this attitude suits, but for most it would look and feel tiring and nervous. Neither is it better to keep



your hands clasped behind your back, except for a minute or two at a time, if only because the position is impossible if you are using notes. For women, it is easy and natural to hold notes or, if they are speaking without notes, a blank card, held easily before them, just above waist level. The same position looks quite natural in men. They have also the advantage that they can slip their hands into their jacket pockets. There is nothing wrong in doing this; some of the best orators do it. They can also occasionally clasp their lapels; both men and women can sometimes stand with hands clasped at full length before them. Or they can use each hand differently—*i.e.*, one hand lightly resting on a table or holding notes, and the other behind the back or in some other easy position. On the whole, you will probably find that it is best to use most of these positions in the course of an address.

Sometimes your hands will be used in gesture, and this brings us to a much-disputed problem. What gestures should be used? In years gone by whole books were devoted to gesture, but now there is a tendency to discourage rehearsed and artificial gesture completely. If a speaker is animated, he will gesture naturally, and that, it is said, is the best answer to the problem. It is not. At the moment I am thinking of one of the best speakers of to-day, who quite spoils his delivery by a mannerism of cupping his hands and holding them up in front of his face. He packs theatres with audiences, it is true, but there is this fault, and I sometimes wonder how much greater his success would be if he could be taught

to avoid it. His fault at least shows us that there must be certain rules governing gesture. We must know what not to do, and perhaps learn something of movements which convey a meaning to an audience.

(i) When approving, explaining, appealing or submitting an idea for consideration, extend one or both hands, palm upwards, towards the audience. To express disapproval or objection, make the same gesture, palms downwards.

(ii) When advising caution or when you are asking for very careful consideration (which implies a slower rate of delivery and slower thinking among your listeners), extend your arms to the audience, with hands pressed back on the wrists and palms showing to the audience.

(iii) To direct attention to a point or during demonstration of a fact, you may point an index finger upwards, but never at your audience.

(iv) A gesture occasionally useful in expressing strong opposition to an idea, is the raising to shoulder height of the clenched fist. By contrast, in expressing welcome, extend the arms as if in embrace.

(v) A rarely used gesture nowadays, but a good one expressive of reverence, is the raising of the right hand slightly above the level of the head, about three-quarters of the palm showing to the audience. To express derision, you may hold your arms almost level with your face, palms downwards. This is a rare gesture, but I have seen it used with marked effect.

(vi) The gesture which marks denial or refutation



brings us to an important principle in the art. Sweep your arm, palm downwards, from one shoulder down towards and past the opposite hip bone. Notice that the gesture should not begin from the shoulder, but from the top of the chest, so that your hand, in moving, does not cross the centre line of your body. Any action which crosses the centre line is ungraceful, and must be avoided. Of course, at some time or other you will see some great orator who, in the earnestness of the moment, breaks this rule, but you will notice that the indefinable something which impels him to it removes the defect the movement usually incurs. Until you are such a speaker, who is above rules, keep this rule always.

(vii) In appealing, the same gesture may be used, but much more slowly and with palm upward.

(viii) Here is a movement which can easily be ugly, but which is worth attention. In conceding a point, especially if you are implying that the concession is unimportant, let the arms hang slightly outward from your sides, at full length; the hands are extended (palms towards the audience) and are waved to and fro several times. Never use this gesture unless you have been assured (or have assured yourself before a mirror, where all gesture should be tested) that it is not ungainly.

(ix) Never turn the backs of your hands to the audience. It would be unwise to go further than these rules and suggestions in a book. You can add to them, or discover gestures which are useful for you personally, by watching the gestures of speakers or actors. You may be able to add many

tiny actions which show ease before your audience. Some of you will remember an action of the late George Arliss, who used to draw his watch from his waistcoat pocket, glance at it, fumble in returning it, and finally catch it before it fell and return it to his pocket. It looked so natural that, until one had seen him have the same accident on different occasions, one did not realise that it was a perfectly timed and practised gesture, expressive of naturalness and ease. One of our present well-known speakers has a similar action. He picks up something, perhaps a watch or pencil, holds it in his right hand for a minute or two while he speaks, then throws it lightly across to the other hand, and puts it into a pocket. One imagines that he is quite unaware of what he has done, but anyone who has listened to him frequently cannot fail to realise that it is his own way of making the audience feel at home with him.

I am not suggesting for a moment that you should build up a repertoire of conjuring tricks for platform use. Avoid anything artificial or theatrical. At the same time, do use gestures, and if you can acquire a few pleasing actions from masters of the art, so much the better. But remember always that you are important, not your gestures. They are important only in so far as they are you and express you. Henry Ward Beecher, who epitomised so many of the truths surrounding oratory, expressed this truth by remarking, "The most important thing in public speaking is the man".

It is now time to think about your head. Most



of this book has been written about what you should be doing inside your head; now it deals with what your head itself should do.

It should be kept well back, so that your appearance is improved and your utterance is clear and penetrating. In ordinary conversation we use our heads fairly freely, but many speakers in front of an audience are stiff-necked. Remember to look round your audience. Each member of it is as important as every other member. Each member is looking at you, and likes to receive a glance from you now and again.

From this you will understand that your eyes are important. If you fail to move your eyes about, you look wooden, and your listeners naturally pay less attention to what you say. Your eyes should range over your audience, from the front row to the back, quietly, confidently and easily, almost as if you are looking for someone.

Recently I was in the audience facing an experienced speaker. He used his head easily, but his eyes never looked to his right. He spoke for fifteen minutes, without one glance towards those of us who were on the "blind" side. A very good speech was wasted for half the audience because of this, for his use of head and eyes was so free and natural, that we on the "blind" side really began to feel resentful. One could feel the restlessness which began to stir among half the audience, and could imagine the silent bets which were being laid as to whether he would look in our direction before he sat down. When he did sit down, a gentleman

behind me whispered good-humouredly to his companion, "Either he didn't know we are here, or we don't matter".

As a matter of fact, it was the most remarkable exhibition of bad use of the eyes I have ever seen, and I was inclined to suspect some defect of neck or eyes until I noticed that, during the address of the next speaker, the first speaker was looking all round the hall with interest. Whatever the explanation of the mystery may be, the example should serve to remind us to look the audience over regularly. Not only does it help to maintain interest, but it helps the speaker to note the reaction of various groups of listeners. This is of special importance to the extempore speaker.

Your face, too, should interest the audience. You do not need to be handsome to be interesting—we can all think of past and present orators whose success certainly did not depend on beauty. But their faces were interesting. The only thing you can do to create this interest, apart from the use of the eyes, is to look pleasant. Smile at your audience. To do so on rising and before you have begun to speak may appear ingratiating, but do not forget to smile before your audience has had time to sum you up finally. However solemn the occasion, you can always look pleasant, and it will be well worth your while to remember this.

It may begin to seem to you that a speaker has a large number of things to remember, apart from his address, while he is facing his audience. Don't be alarmed. All this and more will become second



nature to you after a small amount of practice. So let us go on to some of the other things which you must keep in mind.

The pitch of your voice is one of them. If you speak on too high a note, you will tire quickly. On the other hand, too low a note will make your words inaudible. Most speakers should pitch their voices on the note which is natural to them. If you have a deep voice—rich, perhaps, but deep and smooth—pay particular attention to the clearness of your enunciation. Look at the back row of the audience and speak to it. Everyone else will hear you if you do that.

| Pitch of voice should be varied to avoid monotony. The fault of dropping your voice at the end of phrases should be carefully watched, since the voice should be lowered, as a rule, only at the ends of sentences. In the following example the voice should be slightly raised on the italicized words:—

“A speaker requires *purposeful resolution*, an easy fluency *of speech*, an obvious *sincerity* and a *good appearance*, and he should use *every opportunity*, every single opportunity for practice.”

| By lifting the voice, not only is audibility maintained, but interest, a mild expectancy, holds the audience.

A further note to be remembered about pitch is that, when you wish certain words to sink deeply into minds, you should lower your voice slightly. Or you may raise your voice. The first marks for your listeners the need for careful thought, and the

second requires from them a sudden attention. In the examples here, you can see the effect of each method by reading them aloud:

“The housing shortage means over-crowding, the impossibility of large families, and this in turn means not only loss of man-power for industry and for national defence, but the actual *dying out of our race.*”

“The conditions I have described to you mean not only great suffering for the old, the rearing of a weakened generation of youth, and an unhealthy fear of life, but for a whole continent it means *starvation.*”

The second example shows us an occasion both of the sudden, dramatic attention required of an audience, and of an example of where the voice should be raised at the end of a sentence.

In these examples, moreover, you can see where utterance will gain attention by carefully chosen pauses between ideas. Give the audience time in which to let the significance of what you say grip its attention. Take the last sentence again and notice how good pausing increases its effect:—

“The conditions I have described to you / mean not only great suffering for the old, / the rearing / of a weakened generation of youth, / and an unhealthy fear of life, / but for a whole continent / it means / *starvation.*”

Important sentences should be spaced out like that. This raises the question of the timing of your



speech. You have heard speakers whose delivery is too rapid and others whose slowness makes listening to them tedious. Your own thoughts go ahead of their utterance.

The ordinary timing of English speech is about 110 words a minute. By reading marked passages in a book you can check your own timing and compare it with this standard rate. An important point to remember is that your speech should be paused, which is not quite the same thing as the pausing we have just been thinking about. It means spacing your words out evenly. You may have noticed how some speakers gush a group of words at a time, while others slow down their speeches by pausing after every few words. A good speaker gives every syllable its proper time value, and he talks at an even rate. To quote my own delivery as an example, I speak above the rate of 110 words a minute, yet I give the impression of speaking slowly. I once overheard a man say, "He speaks slowly, but he doesn't seem to waste any time over it". What really happens is that I try to give every word its full value and to speak distinctly, thus appearing to speak slowly and deliberately. Pausing thus means correct timing, not halts in the quarters or halves of sentences.

If you want to study rapid, but even delivery, listen to news bulletins of B.B.C. announcers. They appear to speak comfortably, slowly and easily. Then try to write down what they say as they say it, and you will be amazed at the speed of their delivery. Notice the evenness which is given to each

syllable of their words and, incidentally, the variety of intonation they achieve, so that their announcements are fresh and interesting.

This final chapter for the public speaker must tell you something about the use of notes. Each speaker finds for himself what best suits him, from the man who holds a sheaf of notes to the man who has a small slip of paper.

Before going into the matter, one or two suggestions may be helpful. The first is to use stiff material, such as postcards. These are a convenient size and do not, by bending over, become difficult to consult. The second is that you should either hold your notes fully in view of your audience or, when you wish to look at them, pick them up from the table and let everyone see you are looking at them. There is nothing to be ashamed about in your having to consult your notes occasionally. What is shameful is a furtive, peering method of looking at them, since this forces you either to pause or to speak with your head bent, which makes what you are saying inaudible to some of your listeners. When looking at notes, hold them up just as you would hold a book when reading.

Another point you should consider is that it is wrong to pause while you read your notes. None of us likes a break in a film, when the screen goes blank. Even though it may happen during a rather uninteresting part of the film, our interest suddenly drops; we feel as if we'd missed a step in a stair. The audience feels the same way if a speaker pauses, reads his notes and resumes. If you are a



beginner, you may have to do this, at least during practice speeches, but try to train yourself to look at your notes while you are speaking.

Now the actual use of notes. There are speakers whose notes are almost a full text of their speech, others whose addresses are summarised on nothing larger than a postcard, and yet others who do not use notes at all. Occasionally the newspapers comment on a lawyer or Lord Chancellor who speaks for over two hours without once consulting notes, and this sounds rather miraculous. Really, it is not, nor does it imply that the man has a memory in a million. I have a good memory, but it is not phenomenal. I know speakers whose memory is much better than my own. They use notes and I usually do not. In the past twelve years I have delivered some two hundred addresses annually, on many subjects, and have used notes perhaps about eight or nine times a year. There is nothing in this to be very proud about, because I found that I could "put myself across" much better when freed from notes, and I found out how to dispense with their use.

First we may assume that you do use notes. Make them as brief as possible. Your card should have a synopsis of your speech. Each point should be marked quite clearly from the rest. For some time you might like to write in the beginnings of important sentences, such as the opening sentences of paragraphs. After some practice, however, make your notes just a synopsis of your speech and rely on memory, which improves during practice, for

the actual words in which you have thought out those ideas.

You may also find it useful to mark the main ideas on your card in different-coloured inks. This makes consultation of notes quicker, for while you are speaking the "green" point, you know that next time you pick up your notes you are going to look at what is "purple".

The less you have on your notes card the better. It will be clearer, and therefore more useful.

With these ideas as to how you may experiment to find out what method of note-making best suits you, we pass to speaking without notes. Mgr. R. H. Benson, whose imagery, beautiful language and depth of thought attracted great congregations, used to say that he "saw" his sermons, and did not need notes. His method was to think out his sermons in the fullest detail, analyse them into a complete system of notes, and then think them over to himself with the aid of notes. Sometimes he spent several hours silently preaching in his empty study, if we may express his thinking in that way. When he stood in the pulpit he could see before him the final analysis in note form from which he had thought out his sermon. It was as clear to his mind's eye as if it were printed on a large chart at the back of the church for him to read as he preached.

This is probably the best explanation of the method used by those who speak without notes. As mentioned in the chapter on Extempore Speaking, it assumes that certain passages—*e.g.*, the conclusion—may have been memorised. The system really



means that you have thought over your speech so intently (not necessarily so frequently) that it is inseparable from you. The lines of thought cannot be broken by any distraction; by persevering practice in extempore speaking (which is most interesting and far from being hard work), a breakdown in fluency is not even considered as a possibility. Does this sound exaggerated to you? Or do you see it as something which you cannot attain to?

If you do, I could quote you the experience of other speakers who have found the passage from the written and memorised speech with full notes to the extempore speech without notes comparatively brief. My first public address was not only written and memorised, but delivered with the text before me. Two years later even notes were a hindrance rather than a help. Practice and determination are the means by which a change like that is brought about.

As we have ended previous chapters with miscellaneous cautions, we can close this chapter with a few "don't's".

Do not apologise for speaking. "I am sorry to have to refer to this subject", or "I am afraid that I must ask for a few minutes of your time", and similar remarks are bad mistakes. Explain why you are speaking, if you wish, or do not speak at all. Both courses are possible, but at all costs avoid apologising for speaking, partly because it makes the audience feel that you are trying to "get something off your chest", and partly because you

either should or should not speak, in which two cases an apology is unnecessary.

Do not correct a previous speaker. In fact, unless it is by way of a useful introduction to your own address, you should not refer to a previous speaker at all. If someone has already said something which you must correct, do it indirectly and, if possible, in such a way as to make the correction appear incidental to your own remarks. If you directly correct the mistake of a previous speaker, you will find that the fact is distracting to you, and that it will certainly unsettle some members of the audience.

The position is altered, of course, if it is known at the outset that you are going to oppose the other speaker. Even then, however, your actual corrections should be as gracious and as indirect as possible.

Do not indulge in reminiscences. Speakers will always do this, but since they take longer to narrate their recollections in speech than they would do in writing, the habit makes speeches tedious. If you can illustrate a point by a recollection of personal experience, bring in your reminiscence. But be brief. Once again, be brief.

Do not ask too many rhetorical questions (*i.e.*, to which an answer is not expected), and do not ask questions to which an answer may be expected. One reason is that there are always people present who, quite understandably, are nervous in case you address your question to one of them. These people will never come to listen to you again. Another reason is that you may receive an un-



expected answer. A rather hectoring type of speaker once laboured to impress a truth upon his audience. Admittedly, the audience was rather apathetic and his work was harder than it might have been. Finally, he asked, "Now do you see the light which I have tried to throw upon these facts?" To his indignation and everyone else's amusement, a man replied, "Not a glimmer, sir." Something as fatal to your success can happen if you run the same risk.

I have written this book in a personal way, and close it by wishing you an early enjoyment of the happiness of being able to express your thoughts in public with clearness of thought, fluency and vividness of expression, and that ease which Tennyson described in the lines,

"And Thought leapt out to wed with Thought,  
Ere Thought could wed itself with Speech."

In other words, with an easy command over your audiences. Yours is a great art. May you find success and pleasure in it.

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